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ITS ANCIENT AND PRESENT GLORY.

By JOHN MONAHAN,

Doctor of Divinity, Dean of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.



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An Historical Essay.

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P. J. Walsh
Clonliffe College

AN HISTORICAL ESSAY ON ARDAGH, LONGFORD : ITS ANCIENT AND PRESENT GLORY.

AN eminent topographical writer of acknowledged authority tells us of five Irish parishes bearing this name. These parochial entities are to be found in Cork, Limerick, Longford, Meath, and Mayo counties, each having some claims to historic fame of local, if not wider, interest. Ardagh in Limerick (the subject of this essay excepted) seems to have attained renown of wider interest than any of the aforesaid parishes, by reason of its famed chalice and brooch, at present under the enlightened and careful custodianship of the authorities in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. But Ardagh, in the County Longford, towers over all; just as in hilly and mountainous localities we may have betimes observed various excrescences rise up in symmetrical proportions from the neighbouring valleys or glens, with apparent signs of seeming rivalry, until finally one overtops all others. It is so in the famed Grampian Hills and still more famed "Seven Hills" of Rome. It is so in the Pyrenees and Alpine altitudes, the Rocky Mountains, Connemara, and elsewhere. The subject of this essay—Ardagh, in the County Longford—holds a somewhat similar position in relation to her rival sisterhood already mentioned. She rises over all, not, indeed, by reason of her physical altitude, or material wealth, or numerous population, or municipal and commercial importance, but on account of the moral and spiritual eminence to which she was elevated in the fifth and following centuries by Saints Patrick, Mel, and Brigid. Their names, fame, and deeds have constituted a prestige and woven for her a crown of glory which, in spite of many vicissitudes, endure to this day. The faithful and crucibly-tried co-operation of the successors of the aforesaid trinity of saints has been and is an efficacious factor in this salutary product.

"Quorum pars magna fuit."

"In it their part was magnanimous."

Before setting down the grounds upon which the aforesaid statements rest it seems to me fitting to define with still more precision the location of Ardagh of this essay. It is situated about five miles south-east of Longford town, and about four miles west south-west of Edgeworthstown. It gives name to the barony in which it stands. It takes its name from the elevated spot or situation on which it is placed. "Ard" signifies *eminence*, or height. The *origin* of this ancient place may be ascribed to the middle of the fifth century, when its glory dawned.

The location, origin, and meaning of my subject having been thus explained, only one other observation, as it appears to me, remains to be made, in order to more clearly define and circumscribe the subject of this essay, namely, it is not of Ardagh as a *Diocesan*

Entity, according to the present accepted meaning of this word I am writing. Ardagh as a Diocesan Entity at the present time has a much wider signification and more extended area, stretching, as it most certainly does, from St. Mel's College, Longford, its centre of gravity, and radiating benign influence and sweet light to various points within its legitimate and acknowledged boundaries, terminating in six neighbouring counties. The Ardagh engaging my thoughts and pen, was once, and, indeed, for many years, a centre of Abbatial and Episcopal jurisdiction—the seat of episcopal authority, and the residence of the episcopal personality ruling these parts in those years. It was, therefore, a “city” according to the custom prevailing in those days, but is at the present time only a village. Around this village and its parochial environs much glory, past and present, is encircled, coming mainly from Constellations passed away, coming also from some still living, moving and directing with paternal and judicial care, creating and inspiring vigor; the lofty sentiments and aspirations of a people to whom such a noble heritage has been bequeathed by Divine Providence.

Its *ancient glory* originated in the advent of St. Patrick to its borders. This holy man who may be truly called a man of *blood and iron* in the loftiest sense of these words, and yet of the most tender heart and cultured intellect, had performed a mighty and triumphant processional march before the encampment of his spiritual warriors on the ridge adjoining the North-Eastern side of the Hill of Ardagh. Our Most Rev. Apostolic Delegate or Vicar Apostolic Missionary—Missionary from Pope Celestine—had been to visit the “*Royalties*” at Tara, and to see and preach to the other Gentiles of every rank and class in the Eastern and Southern parts of Ireland, obtained their service and won them as hostages to the one true God. The last place visited by him, according to Bishop Tirechan's Edition of the *Book of Armagh*—the most ancient, authentic and reliable Biography (amongst the many) published regarding our Saint—was the Hill of Ussney, situated about four miles South-East of the village of Ballymore, Co. Westmeath.

Evidently it was a part of the programme or Agenda Business Paper of his missionary march to make for high places of striking historic events and gatherings. *Such a place was Ussney.* Every foot of it, from base to top, may be said to be entwined—even as the ivy does the tree—with deeds of renown from the infancy of authentic historical records in this land. *There* fell the Monarch of Ireland, Lugh Lamhfhada, by the hand of MacCuil, thirty years before the Christian Era. It had been the scene of many other battles fraught with far-reaching issues. It was also the scene of legislative, intellectual and social conventions. *There* Tuathal, hero of one hundred and thirty battles and Monarch of Ireland for thirty years, established towards the close of the first century of our Era, a legislative assembly of the kings, princes and chieftains, and ordained that it should be held annually. He ordained also the annual holding of National sports and pastimes there. A similar assembly takes place annually in our own days near to Douglas in the Isle of Man, and it is called the Manx Parliament.

Ussney was declared to be the central meeting ground for the different Provinces. On its summit was set *The Rock of Divisions*, the lapis umbilicus, the *Navel Stone*, the *Central Stone*, round and smooth as a Boss stone, in the centre of Ireland. This stone is

said to be there at the present time. Certainly it was there when Dr. O'Donovan (engaged on the Ordnance Survey) visited that place. Ware, writing of Ussney, says "the bounds of the Provinces terminated and were distinguished there; to each of which from the top of the mountain four highways lead." From the top of this mountain the first ray of Apostolic light and glory was reflected upon Ardagh. It went out from the luminous and far-seeing eye of Sochet or Sochat—which was the name given to our National Apostle in baptism. It signifies *brave in battle*—a meaning abundantly borne out in his spiritual and missionary life. The name of "Patrick," by which our Apostle is commonly known, was adopted by him a short time before entering on the mission for the conversion of our pagan ancestors, the object being wise and far-reaching. Patrick or Patricius indicated the nobility of his ancestry—showed that the blood of the Patrician order coursed through his veins, although by an unhappy accident he had fallen in early life into the hands of pirates, who made him for a short time a slave—it showed that he was born a citizen of the old Roman Empire, and of its noblest citizens.

This fact was a high passport to the kings and chieftains of our old land, who, amongst their other intellectual qualities, set a high value on the pride of class or caste. Now, Sochet, our Apostolic Missionary, having turned his evangelical mind and eyes north-westwards, the Hill of Ardagh met their vision, and he embraced it in a spiritual and intellectualized embrace. He directed his *Corps d'armée, spirituelle et apostolique*, to move towards it. Having crossed the intervening stretch of land, they arrived at the Inny river and forded it, probably about Tenelick or Abbeyshrule "*Venit perflumen Ethne ad Ardach ad*," writes Bishop Tirechan in the *Book of Armagh*:—"He came from Ussney through the river Inny to Ardagh."

Saint Patrick having arrived at Ardagh, the sun of true light and glory began to illuminate that place and its environs through his heaven-sent personality.

The celestial light of which he was the medium and conductor was, indeed, a long time coming. Twenty-two years passed over since this great ambassador of Christ—commissioned by the divinely-appointed successor of the *Fisherman*—had landed in Ireland and before his blessed feet touched land in Longford, or its hills and valleys re-echoed the musical sounds emitted from his voice and those of his disciples when engaged in chanting the Divine Office.

Great bodies move slowly, especially when the work to be done, the object to be achieved, is of vast, far-reaching, and enduring importance. It is so in the physical as well as in the moral world. See the majestic rivers how smoothly and noiselessly they glide along to their ultimate end. Amongst the ascertained facts, in their fascinating and ennobling science, astronomers lay down as certain that an eighteen foot telescope reveals stars of the thirteenth magnitude, numbering about three million, whose light takes two thousand two hundred years to reach us. They tell us also that the light of the eighteen stars of the first magnitude being two hundred and eleven thousand times further from the earth than our sun, takes three years to reach us. A similar story is to be told of the great doings in the moral world. Magna Charta (the great Charter of Civil Liberty) was an achievement of years of anxious thought, self-sacrifice, and

labour. So was the emancipation of Catholic Ireland. We should not, therefore, wonder at the slow coming of the evangelical light which God emitted through Patrick to Ardagh, especially when we reflect that His ambassador had been engaged in the East, South, and South-West of Erin planting the seeds carried with him from Rome. It was fitting that he and his disciples should stay for a time and watch their growth and advancement. He had also been engaged at the preparation for, and the holding of, a National Synod, in which he assisted the Monarch in making more just and wise laws, and fixing them on a Christian basis, for the better government and welfare of the kingdom. Moreover, St. Patrick was then an aged man, having been sixty years old when he landed at Wicklow in 432. However, our Legate from the Holy See having arrived in Ardagh, soon obtained, as was his wont, an interview with the lord or king of Teffia, whose Milesian residence was in that locality. Our saint had made it a rule of his public procedure to wait on the kings of the provinces which he entered. The spirit of supernatural prudence counselled him that if he succeeded in winning over the rulers to the law of Christ, the people would easily follow. His hopes and expectations were fully realized in this case, as they had been generally in similar circumstances. Mann, as he is commonly called, but more probably Mainè, King of South Teffia in Longford, received St. Patrick with every becoming manifestation of respect and veneration. He was not over slow in seeing the reflection of the Love of God in Patrick's personality and character. Thus moved by the saint's action, Mann or Mainè, the king, after a due period of preparation, received the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

The people of his kingdom or principality soon followed in the footsteps of their royal ruler. Both saw in Patrick supernatural light, in some such way as astronomers see in gigantic telescopes, like Lord Ross's of Birr, the reflected light of heaven, in a marvellous, elevating, vivifying, ineffable way. St. Patrick's visit to Ardagh was to its king and his people something like what expert astronomers of high repute in the scientific world tell us regarding what they term a good night with the stellar regions as viewed through their telescopes—viz., a vision beyond price, beyond description, nay, beyond adequate conception much less comprehension. The learned Colgan writes—"St. Patrick regenerated Mann, the Lord of South Teffia in Longford, in the laver of baptism, and afterwards built a church in the place called Ardachadh, which to this day is the See of Ardagh, and consecrated his sister's son, Melus, bishop of it, with whom he left Melchuo co-bishop. Melchuo was brother to Melus. Mann is the progenitor of the people of Teffia." This statement of Colgan's, a writer of such deep research and admitted accuracy, goes a long way to settle some points disputed amongst the less erudite in this particular quarter of the field of knowledge. The Cronicon Hibernicon, Usher and Ware also state that "St. Patrick founded here in Ardagh an abbey and a cathedral, over which he placed Mel, a Briton, and consecrated him with his own hands. This event took place in or about the year 454. The Cathedral of Ardagh is, therefore, with justice reckoned amongst the oldest churches in Ireland. St. Mel was both bishop and abbot of this



ST. PATRICK BAPTISING THE IRISH KING.

church. In the infancy of the Irish Church the bishoprics and abbeys were frequently blended together, and such ecclesiastics as were consecrated bishops often presided both as abbots and bishops. Under the first title they governed the monks, and as bishops they had the country about the monastery under their care, to ordain priests, appoint curates, and execute other parts of the episcopal functions." In the beginning of the aforesaid quotations it is stated that Mann was the Lord or King of Teffia, and the progenitor of its people. It can scarcely fail to be interesting to inquire what does Teffia signify or indicate—what scope or stretch of our country did it compose or circumscribe in those days, or what were its bounds? In reply, I have to say that Teffia or Tebthia, taken in its integrity, in the fulness of its meaning, indicates an extensive kingdom on the south or south-eastern side of the river Inny, as well as on the western and northern side of that river. In order to be strictly accurate on a matter which has confused many otherwise clear minds, I will transcribe the words of Dr. O'Donovan in a note to his edition of the third volume of the *Four Masters*. Teffia, he writes, at page 156, was anciently a large territory comprising, according to several ancient Irish and Anglo-Irish authorities, about the western half of the present County Westmeath. It appears from various ancient authorities that it comprised the following baronies:—1. The Barony of Rathconrath. 2. That part of the Barony of Magheradernon, lying to the west of the River Brosnagh, and of the lakes of Lough Oul and Lough Ennell. 3. The Barony of Cuirene, now Kilkenny West. 4. The Barony of Brawney—Athlone. 5. Conlonan (into which the O'Melaghlinns were afterwards driven), with that part of it which was added to the King's County, by the procurement of the celebrated Terence Coghlan, and 6. The Barony of Kilcoursey in King's County. O'Flaherty's Oggia states that the lands assigned to the Petits, Tuites, and Daltons were in Teffia. In the fourth century the southern half of this territory of Teffia was granted by the Monarch O'Neil or Niall of the Nine Hostages to his son Maine, from whom it is sometimes, but not frequently, called Tir-Maine of Meath, and among whose descendants it was afterwards sub-divided into petty territories, the lords of which were tributary to the Arch-Chief, who was looked upon as the representative of Maine, though not always of the senior branch of his descendants.

North Teffia was divided from South Teffia by the river Inny or Eithne, and was granted in the fourth century to Carbry, the brother of Maine. This territory is frequently called Cairbre Gabhra in the old Irish authorities, but for many centuries before the English invasion North Teffia was the principality of the O'Farrells, who gave it their tribe name of Anghaile or South Conmaicene. South Teffia was sub-divided into the following lordships or Chieftainries,—viz., 1. Brawney Athlone the Lordship of O'Breen. There is a ruin to this day of an old castle of theirs in Coosan. 2. The Lordship of O'Tolaing, which afterwards came into the hands of the O'Dillons from the period of the Anglo-Norman Invasion, till the 17th century. 3. Calry—Teffia or Ballyloughloe the Lordship of the Magawly. 4. Muintir Tadhgain, the Lordship of the Fox, commonly styled the white Fox or the O'Caharny—O'Kearney, now the

barony of Kilcoursey, in King's County. 5. Corca Adaim or Corca Adain, now in all probability the barony of Mageradernon." Since the establishment of surnames in Ireland which took place probably about the ninth century, O'Catharnaigh, now Fox, a name which originated with Sinnah Finn ua Catharnaigh, *i.e.* Cinaeth, who, whilst King of Teffia, was called the White Fox. As an instance of the important place Teffia holds in history, this name occurs in the *Four Masters* at fifty-nine distinct places and years; whilst in the *Cronicon Scotorum* it occurs in thirty-nine distinct places and years, always connected with some event of greater or less importance. Cairbre Gabhra or North Teffia in Longford, that is the barony of Granard, occurs in five distinct places and years of the aforesaid *Masters*. St. Patrick having christianized the king and his subjects, and obtained glebe or termion lands, and other endowments, directed his attention and that of his disciples to the erection of a monastery or abbey and also a cathedral at Ardagh. In their erection, after the fashion conformable to that period, that is timber poles, wattles and earthy mud, our apostle experienced no special difficulty. On the one hand he had with him his own household numbering twenty-one persons fully equipped for any work to be done in the name of Christ, the Redeemer. He had amongst them a psalmist, a bell-ringer, three smiths, three carpenters, three masons, and three embroiderers of vestments, of whom Lupita, his own sister, was one. Amongst his disciples also was Manchan, a priest, in the words of the *Four Masters*, "of great endowment," whose duty it was to procure, supply and light wood. There was also a charioteer, a guest master or hospitaller, a scribe, a tutor or professor, a chancellor or archdeacon to look after the temporalities, and Bishop Ere to direct the spiritual life of all. He discharged therefore the duties of high penitentiary or spiritual director. As Apostolic Chief, St. Patrick probably did not experience much beyond the minimum of difficulties to be expected in the erection of a monastic institute and cathedral, especially when we reflect that the Royal descendant of the House of Tara, Niall of the Nine Hostages, was at his back, and all his people with him. In a short period of time, therefore, the formal opening of the abbey of canons regular and of the cathedral for public worship should have taken place amidst royal rejoicings and splendour. We may picture to our mind's eye the pagans and heathens who then dwelt in the neighbouring hills, moors, valleys, or hamlets coming after a little time on Sundays to the central place of spiritual power in Ardagh City to worship the one true God—Christ our Redeemer.

The origin of these words *pagan* and *heathen* may not be known to all my readers. To such, a short explanation of their origin and meaning cannot be without interest. *Paganus* is derived from the Latin word *Pagus*, a village, and in its earliest signification designated dwellers in villages and hamlets as distinguished from inhabitants of towns and cities. It had no religious meaning in the earliest stages of its existence. In the beginning of its career it was used sometimes to designate all civilians as contradistinguished from the military body. The followers of Christ were after a time designated the soldiers of Christ, the army of Christ. Thus, after some years had passed over, all who were not of the Christian army—all who were alien from the Faith of Christ—were called *pagans* or heathens,

both being regarded as synonymous. The cause of this change in the signification of the word *pagan* is not far to seek. The early Christian Church not fearing, even in its infancy, the piercing and searching light of Roman and Grecian civilization, made for the seats and centres of learning in the towns and cities of the two Empires, and established itself there triumphantly after severe struggles. For a considerable period of time after the towns and cities of the Roman Empire had embraced the true religion, heathen superstitions and practices were continued in the obscure and remote villages and hamlets of the country. Thus pagans or villagers came to be applied to all who continued to persevere as votaries of the old and decaying superstitions, because far the greater number of them dwelt in the outlying districts. The word *heathen* obtained its present signification in a similar way, for in the infancy of Christianity in Germany the untutored dwellers on the *heaths* were the most obstinate in adhering to their idolatrous practices and in their refusal to go under the sweet yoke of Truth. In the history of these two words is contained a high eulogium on the religion introduced into Ardagh by St. Patrick and his disciples—namely, it dreaded not the all-searching light of the most profound philosophy or cultured knowledge. It feared not to go to the capitals of wisdom and wit and there wrestle with their trained athletes, knowing it would come out as it did, triumphant from the contest, having overcome all opposing powers.

Such was the treasure Patrick brought to Ardagh and its environs, and this is the perennial fountain of all the true glory associated with that hallowed spot since the year 454—a fountain to last longer, we may reasonably hope, than the Colosseum at Rome or the Pyramids of Egypt, of such remote antiquity.

Whilst residing at Ardagh St. Patrick did not confine his labours to that spot. His resourceful mind and energetic body led him to other fields of labour. Thus, he erected a convent at Bri-leith, probably Abbey-darig, the south-western side of Ardagh Mountain, and placed his sister Lupita over it. The site of that conventual establishment may now be viewed where stand monastic ruins cosily nestled beneath overhanging trees, in the neatly-kept and well-enclosed cemetery of Abbeydarig, parish of Carrickedmond. He erected also a convent at Clonbroney, and placed over it the two Emerias, sisters of the first Bishop, Pastor, and Rector of Granard, named Guas-act, the son of his old taskmaster Milcho. He made Granard not only a bishopric, but also an abbey of canons regular. Next he turned his beneficent attention to Forgney, a parish in Meath Diocese at the present time; consecrated one of his disciples named Munis, sent him as bishop and abbot to open a monastery there, and spread the blessings of the Christian religion amongst the people in that district.

In recent days, Forgney became famous for having given birth to Goldsmith—that sweet-tuned poet, of pure, chaste, simple and happy verbiage. Next our Apostle of love and labour went out to Newtown-cashel on the Shannon, and having consecrated St. Rioc, placed him over an Abbey of Canons Regular in Innisboffin to govern the monks as Abbot, and as Bishop to rule the other contiguous islands and the inhabitants of the neighbouring country. Thus from Ardagh, as from

a central station, went out vivifying beams of golden light, leading to and brightening sweet homes of rest. Meanwhile, St. Patrick's household in Ardagh were busy and much occupied at home in their own city and abroad in the neighbouring Abbeys and Convents; for the directions regarding the construction and establishment of the new edifices referred to, were conceived, planned, specified, and carried substantially to completion by the disciples then in Ardagh. Their work went busily forward. It should remind a reader of Virgil of that sublime passage in his *Æneid* where he describes "the toil of the bees beneath the rays of the sun, throughout the flowery fields, in the beginning of Summer, when they lead forth their grown-up offspring, or when they stow away the liquid honey and fill the cells with sweet nectar, or receive the loads of the bees coming in; the work goes busily forward, and the fragrant honey is redolent of thyme." Shakespeare, in *Henry V.*, Act 1, thus renders the above passage:—

So work the honey bees:
Creatures that by a rule in Nature teach
The art of order to a peopled kingdom;
They have a king and officers of sorts,
Where some, like magistrates, correct at home;
Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad;
Others, like soldiers, armed in their stings,
Make boot upon the Summer's velvet buds,
Which pillage they with merry march bring home
To the tent-royal of their Emperor,
Who busied in his majesty surveys
The singing masons building roofs of gold,
The civil citizens kneading up the honey,
The poor mechanic porters crowding in
Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate;
The sad-eyed Justice, with his surly hum,
Delivering over to executors pale
The lazy, yawning drone.

There is an especial fitness in this quotation from Virgil, for the first stone or other ecclesiastical structure in Ardagh as elsewhere in Ireland at that period was beehive-like. Thus even its shape illustrated the unremitting, persevering industry of the founders and builders. Within the park grounds of Sir George Fetherstone, Bart., are still to be seen the remains of the first stone cathedral dedicated to St. Mel. Antiquaries of the highest repute for scholarship in this department of knowledge affirm its remote age. It bears the characteristic signs of buildings of the earliest Christian date. It is Cyclopean, the greater number of its stones being eight feet long. It is uncemented and unmortared, with evidences of its door or aperture having being low and square-headed, whilst the structure itself was clearly small, and what still remains can well be supposed to have been a remnant or section of a beehive building in formation. "Oh! who shall paint these naked stones!" "Oh! for the touch of a vanished hand, the sound of a voice that is still."

The next great historical event reflecting golden beams of refreshing and invigorating light on Ardagh is the performance of the ceremonial rite of the profession of St. Brigid by St. Mel in his own abbey or cathedral church.

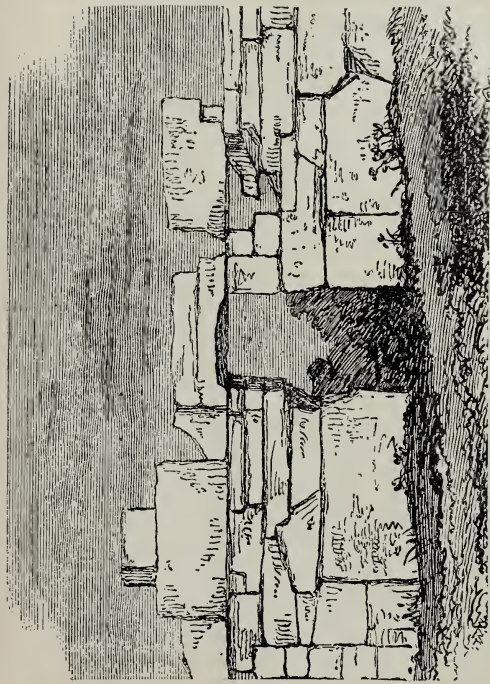
There have been controversies amongst learned men regarding the location of this religious action so pregnant with great results—results extending beyond the land of her birth and the age in which she lived, travelling far away beyond the seas into countries then unknown and undiscovered, and away down through the Middle and Dark Ages to our own time and day, for few other Saints of God have won more votaries for His Universal Church. It will not surprise many readers acquainted with the ancient Irish literature treating of the lives and actions of our primitive Irish Saints to be told that strange and badly sustained opinions have been given by some writers on the subject of her profession as well as on other matters connected with her life. For example, some would try and persuade us that St. Brigid was “*professed*” in the Isle-of-Man. These are more zealous in advancing the glory of Scotland, to which Douglas then belonged, than the interests of historical truth. Others with more show of proof would locate the scene of her profession at Croghan Hill, near Tullamore, or Ussney Hill, in Westmeath. I claim this spiritual honour for Ardagh through the personality of St. Mel—an honour of which the hills, ridges, and valleys of that hallowed district were in times of old very proud, and should be to this day.

The testimony I shall adduce in evidence of this proud claim and high honour will, I hope, prove satisfactory. It is to be observed at the outset that St. Mel was, we are told by his biographers, gifted by God with the spirit of prophecy. Enlightened by this spirit, he foretold, whilst yet in her mother's womb, the sanctity and greatness of Brigid. Sometime after her birth he administered to her the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. *Then* she was made by God the personification of what her Irish baptismal name Brigid signifies—namely, “*shining*,” “*bright*”—yes, a brilliant, supernatural light, illuminating even as do the nocturnal orbs we behold in the firmament over our heads her sisters and brothers at home in Erin and beyonds its seas. The witnesses I am about to produce in support of the Ardagh claim just advanced are Professors Eugene O'Curry, O'Looney, and Dr. Joyce, whose scholarship on questions like the present is beyond all controversy.

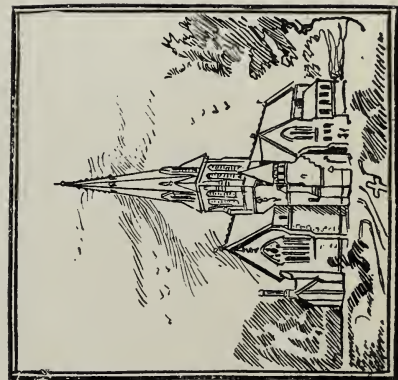
The following is an extract from Eugene O'Curry's translation of the Life of St. Brigid—to be found in the Catholic University Collection of his MSS., now preserved at Clonliffe College, Dublin, where I was directed by the late learned and gifted Father Denis Murphy, S.J., a man of profound research and varied knowledge, combined with great self-sacrifice, to go in search of it. An odour of sanctity and learning perfumes his name and memory amongst the members of his own Order and his associates in the Halls of the Royal University, Royal Irish Academy, the Library of Trinity College and King's Inns. He died a martyr of devotion to labour in the perpetuation of the deeds and memories of Irish Saints and Martyrs. The last revised words in the proof sheets of his Book on Holy Cross, Co. Tipperary, touched by his pen, are remarkable ones—“I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Next morning his body was found in bed sleeping the sleep of death. Through the kind permission of Monsignore Fitzpatrick, then President of Clonliffe, I found it after much laborious searching. The extract states—“Dubtach said to his daughter ‘My daughter take a



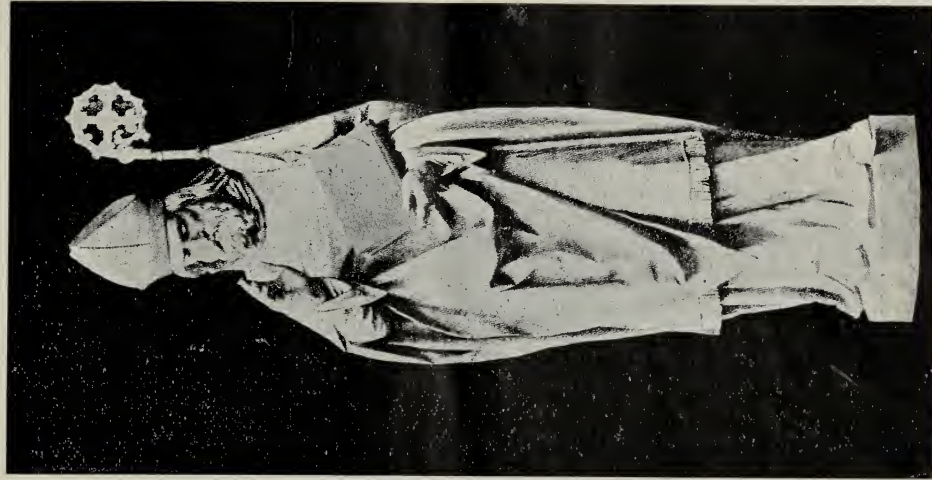
ST. BRIGID.



RUINS OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF ARDAGH.



NEW CHURCH AT ARDAGH.



ST. MEL.

veil upon your head: if you have dedicated your virginity to God I shall not deprive Him of it.” Brigid, now being anxious to have the *order of penance* conferred upon her, went to Bri-Eile, and seven other veiled women with her having heard that Bishop Mel was there, and when they had arrived there the Bishop was not there, but had gone into the country of the Ui Neill.

She went therefore on the next day, MacCaille leading the way before her over Moin-Fathnigh, *i.e.*, Bougna Bog. There is now no bog bearing that name in the territory of Offaly—Dr. O'Donovan says—in his *Four Masters*.

Brigid caused the Bog to be a flowery plain to them. When they came near to the place in which Bishop Mel was, Brigid requested MacCaille to put a veil upon her head in order that she should not come without a veil into the presence of the clerics, and probably it is this veiling that is commemorated on this day. When she had come now a column of fire ascended from her head to the ridge of the Church. When now Bishop Mel saw this he asked who the veiled women were. MacCaille said—“This is the illustrious veiled woman of Leinster, viz., Brigid.” “My welcome unto her” said Bishop Mel; “it was I that prophesied of her in her mother's womb, and it is I that shall confer orders¹ upon her. What have the veiled women come for”? said Bishop Mel. “To have the order² of Penance conferred on Brigid,” said Mac Caille.

Then orders were read over Brigid, and it was the orders of Bishop that Bishop Mel conferred upon her. And then MacCaille put the veil upon Brigid's head. And from that time forward Brigid's successor is entitled to have Bishop's orders³ conferred upon her. And whilst he was reading the order upon her, Brigid was holding the leg of the Altar in her hand, and although four churches were burned and that leg in them—yet it was not burned—(See O'Curry's MSS. Life, Translation page 28, 29, 30, 31. Brussels Collection).

In Professor O'Looney's Irish MSS. Life, it is expressly stated that St. Brigid went to take the veil from Bishop Mel, pages 17 and 18. “Come,” said Mel, “until a veil is blessed upon thy head,” &c., &c., &c. The same learned professor translated for me the sentences in the Life of St. Brigid, to be found in the “Leabhar Brac,” edited, collated, and annotated by himself, bearing upon this subject, and gave it as his opinion that they decidedly prove the religious profession of St. Brigid was performed by St. Mel in Ardagh. The learned and gifted Professor added, “before I had seen the O'Curry MSS. I held a different opinion.”

The learned Dr. Joyce—with much kindness and sacrifice of time—like Professor O'Looney, helped the present writer, who has not the valuable advantage of being an adept in the language of his native land—and has had to lean upon authentic scholarly translations of the Irish language and the kindness of living linguists to assist him; also examined the passages in the “Leabhar Brac” relating to this point, and gave it as his opinion that Bishop Mel professed St. Brigid, and in Ardagh.

Archdeacon Lynch in MSS. History of the Episcopal Succession since the days of St. Patrick in Ireland—a manuscript highly valu-

¹ The Sacramentals such as the ceremony of Profession is.

² A profession and practice of a *penitential life*.

³ The office of Abbess, resembling somewhat in authority the office of a Bishop



ST. MEL GIVING ST. BRIGID THE WHITE VEIL.

able and very rare—(only two copies of it exist in Great Britain, one in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and another in Trinity College, Dublin, from which, by order of the Council of Fellows, signed by the Provost, Dr. Salmon, in the year 1886, the present writer was kindly permitted to take notes, and a third copy, at present in Sydney amongst the books of his Eminence Cardinal Moran, which copy was made for him whilst secretary to his Eminence Cardinal Cullen, through the kind interference of Dr. Todd, who obtained a suspension of the standing rules in this matter, and permitted Mr. Sweeney, now Custodian, R. I. A., Dawson Street, to remove the MSS. from Trinity College temporarily, and transcribe it for Dr. Moran). The said Archdeacon Lynch inclines much, without formally adopting it, to the opinion that St. Brigid's profession was performed at Ardagh by St. Mel.

The learned writers who maintain that Bishop MacCaille performed this ceremony at Croghan, near Tullamore, or at Ussney, may have lapsed into this mistake through the fact that he had a considerable share in the ceremony, as is manifest. On the whole, however, it seems pretty clear that Bishop MacCaille acted only as assistant on that occasion to St. Mel, whose disciple he certainly had been, before being elevated to the Episcopacy, and whose nephew also he probably was. Moreover, O'Curry in his MSS. translation, already quoted, states that MacCaille and Brigid followed St. Mel into the country of the Neill in Teffia. Now St. Mel and his clerics resided at Ardagh in Teffia, in the territory of King Mann or Mainè, son of Niall of the Nine Hostages.

I have reserved perhaps the strongest argument for the last place, namely, the Bollandists hold that St. Mel professed St. Brigid in his own church at Ardagh. Once more, therefore, I may write: Exult ye hills and valleys, priests and people of Ardagh, inheritors of such glory vouchsafed by God to you as a most precious heritage, through his faithful servants, Mel and Brigid. The profession of St. Brigid there is a memorial—although not cut on stone or cyphered on bronze, or immortalized in a fresco such as is to be seen in Cormac's Chapel on the Rock of Cashel, or such as that famous Egyptian fresco, painted three thousand years before our era, representing two girls working at a tapestry loom constructed on almost identical principles with those now in use in the famous Gobelin's factory in France—to endure as long or longer than any of these objects alluded to, because it shall ever be enshrined in the grateful minds of Erin's daughters and Erin's sons.

It has been already stated in this essay that St. Patrick established at Ardagh an Abbey of Canons Regular, and not only there, but in several other places. The custom was in those days, wherever an Abbey stood—*there* were Canons Regular. This Order was continued in Ireland since the middle of the fifth century down to the reign of King John, which began with the opening of the thirteenth century, when the local chieftain, O'Quinn, established a Priory of Canons Regular in Abbeydarig; and even later still, to the reign of Queen Mary, 1553, when an Abbey of Canons Regular existed in Athlone. There was no other name for religious communities of men in Ireland until the Franciscans, Dominicans and Cistercians were introduced towards the close of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth

century. About that time, The O'Farrell, petty king of Longford, established the Cistercians at Abbeyshrule and the Dominicans in Longford. In a conversation with the late lamented and scholarly Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J., at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, he told the present writer that, having devoted a good deal of attention to the consideration of the question: viz., what special mode or form of religious life did the Canons Regular represent, he had come to the conclusion that their "Order," as we now-a-days say, designated simply a community of priests who agreed to live together under a common rule, whilst they attended to the religious wants of the faithful committed to their care, and the celebration of the Divine offices in the house to which they attached themselves.

Distinct religious orders of men under other names had no existence in Ireland before the 13th century. Nor were distinct religious orders of women bearing other names than Canonesses of Augustine to be found in Ireland for a long period after the profession of St. Brigid. During her lifetime, and for centuries after, all the members of female Conventual Communities, like the Canons regular, lived under and observed one common rule or *Canon*, the *Brigidine Rule*, and wore one common costume, a white garment and white veil, which was the dress placed on Brigid by MacCaille and Bishop Mel. Before and for centuries after all Irish nuns wore dresses of the same colour. Nor did there arise in Ireland for centuries after her death distinct religious orders of nuns. Up to the time of her profession consecrated virgins lived with their friends and discharged the ordinary household duties. Afterwards it was thought desirable that they should cease to reside with their friends and go and live in Community. Strict enclosure was, however, a plant of very slow growth, and did not come to maturity for a long period after the religious ceremonial in Ardagh. However, Brigid established a Conventual Community notwithstanding her youth. She was then only fourteen or sixteen years old, the age at which virginal vows were then commonly made, it being the marriageable age for females. This continued to be the common law and practice until the holding of the Council of Trent about the middle of the sixteenth century.

Our annalists tell us that Bishop Mel erected for Brigid and her eight companion sisters a suitable habitation in which was established the first Irish Community of Nuns. This generous action on the part of the Bishop was entirely in harmony with Brigid's holy desires, for he had been her best friend and patron. Therefore she desired to start her community life under his guidance. The Bishop provided not only the habitation, but also the means to sustain it. The people nobly assisted, for we are told they presented her with ten cows, one for each sister in her religious establishment, and two for herself. The king also made endowments. She was not solicitous for what she was to eat or drink, and yet God, through his Ardagh servants, supplied all in abundance. The chief object of her anxious care—whilst the ordinary industrial pursuits were attended to—was to advance in the narrow path of perfection on which she had entered. The Abbess Brigid soon was regarded as a model of the Evangelical virtues, particularly of humility, not only within the limits of her religious home, but outside it. Thus many ladies soon

became Postulants to enter her Community. After a few years new foundations were made beyond Ardagh and increased as years went on until their number was very great. Bishops Mel and Melchuo were her spiritual and temporal advisers all through. The King was her temporal patron, and even entertained her and the Bishops at a Royal Banquet, as was the custom of those days. Hospitality not only amongst Kings, Princes, and Bishops, but also every class down to the most simple and lowly was regarded and cultivated in ancient Ireland as a lovely virtue.

Thus we read in authentic history of kings, princes, and chieftains coming with their retinues to the residences of humble bishops and abbots, and partaking of their hospitality for some days. Such social meetings took place in the earlier ages of Christianity not only in Ireland but also in Scotland and England. Brigid made it a rule of her community life to be very hospitable to bishops. Shortly after the opening of her conventual house in Ardagh, our annalists wrote that on the occasion of one of these banquets, the holy bishop who was about to preside and bless the viands, was requested by St. Brigid to refresh their souls with some spiritual food before partaking of the corporal food. The good bishop assented, and discoursed eloquently upon the Eight Beatitudes. At the ending of his sermon, St. Brigid said to her holy virgins: "We are in number eight virgins, and eight virtues are proposed to us for our observation and sanctification. Altho' whoever has one virtue in a perfect degree, must necessarily possess many other religious excellencies, as every single virtue is bound up and connected with one of a different kind; however, let each of you select whatever particular beatitude you may desire for your special devotion."

This suggestion brought much joy, and won the approval of her sisters, who requested their Mother Abbess to make her choice before any of them. At once—right off—she selected Mercy for her special devotion and loyal service. Yes, she almost instinctively paid special homage to the virtue "that is twice blessed—which blesses him who takes and him who gives"—the virtue without which all other virtues are of little or no avail. Justice is never so respected or calculated to attain its end as when well tempered with mercy. This was her darling virtue, and doubtless a powerful factor in the wonderful success that followed her labours as Abbess-General of the numerous conventual institutions that afterwards grew out of her first home in Ardagh.

It cannot therefore be a matter of surprise that a popular tradition connects St. Brigid with St. Mel, as chief patroness of Ardagh, and that a *holy well* dedicated to her honour is to be seen near the village of Ardagh, where Mass used to be said in the penal days. Her festival is celebrated there on the first of February with special devotion and honour. And if it does occasion surprise to any person, a more intimate acquaintance with her associations in relation to St. Mel, Melchuo, and their monastic institute should dispel this feeling. I will refer briefly to two other facts, recorded about her associations with St. Mel. The first is that he and Melchuo held several spiritual conferences with her, and were much directed by her wonderful supernatural wisdom. The second is that on a certain occasion St. Mel and other bishops visited her about Easter

time, and that through want of foresight on the part of the sister or sisters in charge of that department of the conventual management, there was no beer. And on the Octave Day of the Great Feast of the Resurrection, Brigid said to the sisters: "Hath that beer reserved for our Easter solemnity been given out, for I am solicitous regarding St. Mel and the guests of Christ?" The nuns replied that God would give them a sufficiency. Then they brought on their shoulders a vessel filled with water to the Saint, that she might bless it according to her usual custom. Supposing it to be beer, their Abbess said, "We give thanks to God, who hath reserved this for our bishop." On examination it was found to be beer. It was St. Brigid's first miraculous action. Oh! blessed be God, how wonderful in all His works! How this recorded historical fact brings one to the Marriage Feast at Cana in Galilee, where Christ our Lord performed His first miracle by changing water into wine at the request of His Blessed Mother, the ostensible cause being to save the hostess and host from the embarrassment consequent on a deficiency of that nutritious and hospitable beverage. St. Mel was a man of not only great spiritual attainments, but also of great intellectual endowments and acquirements. He wrote a life of St. Patrick; our Annalists record this fact, although in the general wreck and ruin that carried to everlasting destruction so many other valuable documents it is not extant. Mel was born a Briton, and brought up in his earlier days within the confines of the old Roman Empire, and therefore participated in the advantages of its civilisation. He also had the priceless gift of an enlightened and highly virtuous Christian mother, a sister to St. Patrick. He was the offspring, therefore, of a noble Christian family, in which the priesthood was an heirloom. He had received before coming to Ireland with St. Patrick a most liberal education and of the best type then supplied in Gaul and Italy.

It must be presumed reasonably that St. Patrick was very careful to bring with him for the conversion of Ireland a bodyguard of disciples not only holy, but also learned in the ecclesiastical science of the fifth century, especially as his predecessor, Palladius, had failed to convert to Christ our Pagan ancestors. Now, Mel was one of those who landed with him at Wicklow, and was very probably a bishop, certainly a priest, before St. Patrick reached Ardagh. Here it may be interesting to inquire what measure and quality of learning of ecclesiastical science should we reasonably suppose our national saint to have acquired and to have required in his followers before setting out for the conversion of our idolatrous ancestors. Before answering this question it will be necessary to glance at the state of education in Gaul and Italy, where Patrick had been since his liberation from captivity, about the age of twenty until the age of sixty, when his Irish mission began. It is to be observed, in the first place, that the cultivation of learning of "polite letters" had reached its high water-mark about the period of St. Patrick's birth, and did not begin to decline until after the fall of the old Roman Empire, A.D. 476. St. Patrick's school and collegiate days synchronised with the palmiest days of the civilisation which was the outcome of the knowledge imparted in the ancient Empires of Greece and Rome. And this is especially true of those parts where St. Patrick

was born and educated, for the beneficent influence of the Emperor Constantine's ruling hand was more freely acknowledged and more liberally exercised in Italy, Gaul, and Brittain than in any other part of his gigantic empire. Now, it is an acknowledged fact that about or before this period, all, or nearly all, that was best in the liberal arts, profane literature and philosophy as taught at Athens and Alexandria, had been in one shape or other imported into the public schools of the old Roman Empire. The atmosphere, therefore, of St. Patrick's collegiate and monastic training in Brittain, Gaul, and Italy was, from a secular point of view, laden with learning and the spirit of its pursuit. St. Augustine gives us an instance of the extremities to which the love of "polite letters" was carried when he states that the professors of grammar and rhetoric in the academies treated it as a greater fault in their pupils to pronounce "Homo" without an aspirate than to hate man. Notwithstanding such faulty ethics—the circumstances of the times forced Christians to resort to these academies. Tertullian, in his treatise on Idolatry, defends the lawfulness of this practice amongst the faithful of that period, because they could not otherwise acquire that necessary knowledge of letters, which is the "Key of life," and because they were perfectly free to reject the fables to which they were obliged to listen in those academic halls.

After the triumph of the Church over Paganism, the most religious parents, such as those of St. Basil, did not hesitate to send their sons to the academies. St. Gregory of Nazianzen, A.D. 394, wrote in favour of this practice. His words are:—"I leave to others fortune, birth, and every other fancied good which can flatter the imagination of man. I value only science and letters, and regret no labour that I have spent in their acquisition. I have preferred and shall prefer learning to all earthly riches, and hold nothing dearer on earth, next to the joys of heaven and hopes of eternity." St. Basil, A.D. 373, writes in a similar way, and tells us how Moses and Daniel became adepts in the Gentile learning before devoting themselves to the study of Sacred Science, and after referring to some of the excellent maxims which he, a Christian, may find in Homer and Horace and apply to his own benefit, adds "a Christian student should follow the example of the bees, who draw out honey from flowers which seem only proper to charm the eye or gratify the smell. But then they must also imitate them, in only selecting those flowers that yield honey; and when they extract the sweet juices, let them be careful to leave the poison behind." This state of things was, of course, *merely* tolerated owing to the imperious necessity created by circumstances. Nevertheless, it shows the state of learning and the high honour in which it was held in the days of St. Patrick. I shall now refer to his monastic and scholastic training. It is certain that the monastic institute was introduced into the Western from the Eastern Church in the fourth century, and that after that the community life of the Bishops and their clergy assumed a more regular form. It is equally certain that the monastic institute had its origin in the apostolic life at Jerusalem, and afterwards in the desert, and so is called the "Apostolic Order." The Fourth Council of Carthage regulates the manner of life to be followed by the Bishops and their clergy in distinct and exact terms:—"The

Bishop is to have his residence near the Church; he is to commend the care of temporalities to his Archdeacon, and to occupy himself exclusively with prayer, study, and preaching. In the Church he is to have a higher seat than his clergy, but in the house he is enjoined to recognise them all as his colleagues in every respect, and never permit them to stand whilst he is seated." This was the sort of Monastery established at Hippo by St. Augustine. It was founded on the Apostolic Order, and called "Canons Regular," and is, therefore, regarded as the parent of all the houses afterwards called Abbeys or Priors of Canons Regular.

The office of Archdeacon, as alluded to above, was continued in the Irish Church (at Clonmacnoise for instance), until a comparatively recent period, but for years has been abolished. Almost simultaneously with the Monastic institute, and attached to it rose up a Catechetical School, then a Levitical School with Lectors, and next an Episcopal School, and finally, out of all grew public schools in the Western as well as in the Eastern Church. Such action was enforced by Councils in the Eastern and Western Churches. Thus St. Isidore, A.D. 400, who presided over an Episcopal Seminary established by his brother, St. Leander of Seville, both stepping forward in advance of their time, but with far-seeing eyes in relation to true science, ordained that in their seminary the course embrace five books treating of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, dialectics, music, geometry, mechanics, astronomy, jurisprudence, chronology, and history. The sixth is on the Holy Scriptures. The seventh and eighth on the Holy Angels. The ninth on the various nations and languages of the earth, and the remaining books treat of etymology.

Nor did he stop here. He went and nobly started private schools under Christian teachers, primary schools as we call them. All these things took place before or in the days of St. Patrick's collegiate training, and the Gallican bishops before and contemporaneously with his time decreed "that ecclesiastics should study a full course of Letters." "*Litteras omnes discant.*" Having established these premises we may be in a fairly good position to form an opinion of the probable quantity and quality of learning St. Patrick and his disciples represented on their touching the shores of Erin. Waiving for the present all controversy regarding his birthplace (altho' firmly believing in Dumbarton, Scotland, as that privileged spot) I think no one will dispute about the sources of his education. First of all he had Christian parents, and of the noble class of priestly connections. Secondly, in those days, Christian parents recognised in their integrity their duties towards their children. Therefore, we do not find any record in the earlier ages of the Christian religion, or in all antiquity of any public catechism for children. It was not needed for, writes St. Chrysostom, "Every house was a Church." The great historian, Fleury, tells us "Christian parents took care of the catechetical instruction of their own children." This office of catechetical instruction devolved usually on the mother. The Sacred Scriptures suggest this order. St. Paul, (2. Timothy, C. 1. Verse 5) reminds Timothy of what he owed to his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. St. Basil and his brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa, gave thanks to God for the instructions received in infancy and youth from their grandmother, St. Macrena the Elder. Their brother gives

praise to God because of the catechetical instructions given him by his sister. St. Gregory describes in the following words the care vouchsafed to his sister by his mother—"My mother," he says "took extreme pains with her instruction, not after the manner customary with those of her age, who are ordinarily taught the fables of the poets. Instead of these, she made her learn such portions of the Scriptures as were easiest to understand. She began with the Book of Wisdom, and thence went on to the Psalms." The education of St. John Chrysostom was, according to his own testimony, a plant of the same growth, and so glorious, so beautiful was that plant, the pagan, sophist though he was, exclaimed in a moment of enthusiasm—"Ye gods of Greece how wonderful are these women of the Christians." I shall only name St. Thecla, the disciple of St. Paul; St. Olympia of St. Chrysostom; St. Eustocheum of St. Jerome, and St. Marcella, "the glory of the Roman ladies," as personalities illustrating the nobility of their sex in connection with catechetical teaching in the primitive Church. Every Christian home then was a school for teaching catechism. This being so, what must we think of the young Christian boy *Sochet* or *Sochat* (which means brave in battle) and his Christian mother, living and breathing the atmosphere of the old Roman Empire, and in a military town?

The answer rises to the lips. His Christian mother was equal to her duties in relation to her son, and although an unhappy accident permitted him to be seized by pirates, yet the angel of God followed him, developed his mother's instructions, helped him over the difficulties of his captivity, and by natural means on the *substratum* or foundation of the *supernatural*, delivered him through the agency of Spanish mercantile vessels into the hands of Christians and the influences of home, where the Monastic School, the Episcopal School, and Seminary in turn, received him in preparation to be—

A veritable heaven's messenger,
Clad in a mitre, crozier, and cope of light.

It reminds one of the history of Moses and David.

What we read of his doings and sayings whilst in captivity on the Antrim Mountains, suggests the teachings of a noble Christian mother, illustrated in a brave Christian youth struggling with adversity. It cannot be reasonably supposed that his captivity over, and his freedom achieved, he was wholly unfit for the Monastic School. It must be admitted amidst the cloudy controversy raised by so many zealous writers over his name, that he passed soon after regaining his freedom, to the first schools in the Western Church—namely, Tours, Lerins, and Rome, and that his elevation to the Episcopal office took place in Rome.

The period that elapsed between his going to the monastic school and his elevation to the episcopacy was about 40 years—a fairly long time to be engaged in learning in the public schools of the church.

It may be all this time was not passed in the Academic Halls—probably a portion of it was passed in the spacious corridors of the university of the world. Some say that our Saint after having passed through the hands of St. Martin of Tours and St. Germanus of Auxerre, went to Rome and studied there for eight years, returned to Germanus went with him on a mission of evangelization to Brittany and returned

to Rome. Whilst in Brittany, the Priest Sochet having shown a capacity for the conversion of Pagans was, after some time, recommended to Pope Celestine as a fit and most worthy successor to St. Palladius. We should therefore most reasonably judge St. Patrick to be a man fully equipped in all the ecclesiastical learning of the period, and that he was most careful in the selection of his coadjutors, especially as his predecessor had been a failure. That certain expressions against his learning are found in his confessions is certain—that they prove nothing against his learning and culture is equally certain. The most learned men known to history have spoken and written in a similar depreciating tone of themselves, partly from humility, but especially from the stand-point of their want of knowledge or ignorance in relation to the great, unexplored, unknown sea of knowledge stretching out before the united intellect of mankind, as an unknown and unexplored entity. Holy David, St. Paul and Saint Augustine furnish examples in this matter—so do Lord Bacon and others known to fame. In our own day, Eugene O'Curry, a scholar of gigantic intelligence, regarded himself as a servant not a master of truth, and wrote "No person knows my bitterly-felt deficiencies better than myself." He acknowledged the lesson often impressed by nature on her greatest sons—but too often forgotten—that

"Study is like the Heaven's glorious sun,
That will not be deep-searched with saucy looks."

From the master and chief of the Apostolic mission to Ardagh we may form an opinion of the qualities of Mel and his other disciples. It is not pretended he was born on Irish soil—for Mel was a Briton and nephew of St. Patrick—was probably a bishop—most certainly a priest, before landing at Wicklow, and therefore we may reasonably infer a man of true learning. That "he lived by the labor of his hands" proves nothing against his high culture. This was a rule of life laid down in the apostolic canons. Greater and more learned men than Mel did not disdain to observe it, and their intellectual weapons were not blunted by the practice. And when about the close of the Fifth Century some of the first fruits of St. Patrick's schools—seven brothers and three sisters—started on a pilgrimage to the Lyons district in France and settled down on the banks of the Marne on the invitation and under the patronage of the holy and cultured St. Remi, their biographer writes "They did not live only on the charity of those to whom the pious president had recommended them, but also on their own industry and the labor of their hands, in accordance with the customs of the religious bodies in Ireland" "This life," he adds, "united to wonderful holiness and constant prayer, won for them a great love among the natives of the country."

It was not only an edifying, but also a useful practice. It served for physical exercise as well as for other holy purposes. It is a rule strictly observed, even in these days, by the Cistercian Monks in every land. It does not interfere with their cultivation of learning in all its branches, nay, helps its acquisition and retention. The present most highly-gifted, distinguished, and learned Rector of the Royal University, Dublin, Monsignore Molloy, D.D., (*decus et tutamen*, an honour and a safeguard to any place he undertakes to represent and guide), when on the eve of standing a public thesis, as they term it at Maynooth College, for the first year's Divinity Chair, vacant in 1857,

took part in a game of cricket, and as he was standing with a bat in his hands, one of his competitors for the chair, the Rev. Dr. Forrest, then C.C. at Kingstown, afterwards Rector of the Catholic and State-paid University of Sydney, passing by on the adjoining walk said, "Oh! so you have given up the chair?" "No," said Dr. Molloy, "I am preparing for it." Dr. Molloy played out the game successfully. Next and succeeding days until the end of the public examination he was in his place in the pulpit at the proper time, and at the end of the disputations was declared the winner of the chair. Cardinal Manning when at Oxford was, like Dr. Molloy, a distinguished cricketer and athlete. Physical exercise contributes its share to mental health. The old saying is most true, "*Mens sana in corpore sano*"—a sound mind in a sound body. Intellectual and physical athleticism are twin brothers.

The foregoing incident about the game of cricket reminds one of what happened at the Bowling Green on the Hoe at Plymouth on the afternoon of the 19th July, A.D. 1588, the eve of the famous battle in which the English Navy defeated the Spanish Armada. A group of English captains, such perhaps as was never assembled there since, with Sir Francis Drake, the first English circumnavigator of the globe, at their head, and Lord Howard of Effingham, High Admiral of England, was there gathered and engaged in playing a game at bowls. During the progress of the match a small armed vessel was observed running into Plymouth Harbour with all sails set. Her commander, Fleming, the master of a Scotch privateer, landed in great haste and sought the English Lord Admiral and his captains, and told them that he had that morning seen the Spanish Armada off the Cornish coast. The captains having received this exciting information, began to hurry down to the sea and call for the ships' boats; but Drake coolly checked his comrades, and insisted that the game should be played out. He said, "We shall play out the game and beat the Armada too." The game was resumed, the match was scored, the admirals and captains rejoined their fleet and defeated the Spanish Armada, thus making one of the seven decisive battles of the world. It has been written that the great battles of England were in their initial stages won on the cricket fields of England.

But to return to St. Mel, who, being a spiritual Captain in St. Patrick's invincible little army, won, or had his share in winning, the most decisive, the most golden-dowered, the most fruit-giving, and the most far-reaching in heaven-blest and heaven-sent results—even taking the fullest account of the almost innumerable battles recorded by our Annalists—ever fought and won on Irish soil. St. Mel having been brought up and trained under such masters, was not slow, it is safe to affirm, in reproducing their teaching and spirit as far as the circumstances in which he was placed allowed him to do so. Thus a school for catechumens, a Monastic school for primary education, and after a time an Episcopal school were established at Ardagh. Some years having elapsed, priests were ordained, and as time went on some of them, doubtless, went over to that same France and Italy, whence their parent house had come, to help in repairing the damage done by the destructive hordes of Attila in the hitherto fair gardens of the Catholic Church. It is said he led five hundred

thousand warriors into Italy and France and destroyed everything that came in his path, sparing only those places that opened their gates to him. It was a common saying that the grass once trodden by his horse never was green again. Miss Stokes, a writer of classical books on such subjects, tells us in her highly edifying, pleasing, and instructive works, entitled "Six Months in the Appenines," and "Three Months in the Forests of France," where she followed and lovingly lingered in the footsteps of Irish Monks and Nuns, that towards the close of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries several holy priests and nuns went out to France and Italy to endeavour to undo the evil done by that destroying Angel of Satan—Attila. For even at that early period of our history we are assured by credit-worthy authorities that "the country of Ireland, rich in those learning, and flourishing in the fertile pasturage of students, resembles the star-bearing Heaven, adorned by the quivering of brilliant constellations." "Crowds of Gaulish students," writes Hau-rean, "sought the Irish shores in order to win back again from their pupils of former times the learning they had lost themselves." The period of St. Patrick's advent to Ireland had been favourable to an abundant and efficient supply of highly-trained ecclesiastics from France and Germany to forward the conversion of Ireland, establish and develop its schools and monasteries, for it synchronized with the descent of Atilla and his German hordes upon religion and civilization in Italy and France. Their march was like the advent of a desolating hurricane. It was like the period of the terrible French Revolution towards the close of the 18th century, when our great college of Maynooth was manned by French Professors—refugees from the destructive storm and rack of sanguinary Atheism and Infidelity. St. Mel of Ardagh, and his schools and monastery participated in the benefits brought to Ireland by the *refugee* priests, and in turn, after the storm had passed over, and when opportunities arose, sent priests and nuns to avangelize in France and Italy. St. Mel had good material to work upon. For the people of Ireland, numbering at that period about three millions, were, speaking of them as a body, a chastity-loving race, and had high intellectual ideals. That their history is a record of wars and bloodshed does not upset this theory, or rather I should say, historic fact, testified by many eminent writers. The sword was, indeed, in the hand of everyone of her inhabitants at the time, and was her chief argument, but it was also the chief institution at the same period in every other nation in Europe. With the warlike spirit of the times, arose and accompanied a noble spirit of chivalry and respect for woman and the virtue which constitutes the nobility of her sex and her chief claim to honour. Woman's position in Ireland at that time and her love of chastity is beautifully illustrated in the character of Queen Meave or Mab, as described in the Ossianic poems, and more recently by our gifted contemporary, Aubrey de Vere. St. Patrick, who had lived for nearly forty years in the sunshine of Roman, Grecian, and Papal civilization, tells us of the noble virtues of the Irish females of his day, their graces of mind and manner. He tells us of the gifts and ornaments which they everywhere brought after their conversion and threw upon the altar. The military character of the nation demanded and enforced strong rules,

in relation to woman's honour. History teaches that a people, perseveringly great on the battle-field, have been also distinguished for great national virtues, and amongst them chastity. Wherever arms are a profession, military discipline is sure to prevail and form a powerful factor in civilization. Many able writers have borne testimony to this truth, and quite recently Cardinal Gibbons of America, in his *Ambassador of Christ*, where he writes about the discipline at the Academies of West Point and Annapolis, and its results in after life. Those who decry the Irish of the fifth or any other century on account of their wars and love of war, should recollect that the history of the world is against them. King David was a warrior and was also a poet. Socrates and Zenophon fought side by side at Delium, 424 B.C., as Livy tells us, 31 C. 45, L. 3, and both are well known to fame in the world of letters as great and good men and benefactors of the human race. That great and good man, Horace, to whom civilization owes so much, fought side by side with Brutus and Cassius in Asia Minor. St. Paul, too, was a man of the sword before he became a Christian. The soldier, with all his faults, is the representative in the natural order of great self-sacrifice and heroism which needs only a breath, a divine spark from heaven, to lift it to the heroism of the saints. St. Paul, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and many others, are illustrious proofs of this statement. No wonder, therefore, that St. Mel and St. Brigid, having such a people to deal with found it easy to get disciples in Ardagh, and carry on God's work with great success. It was much in favour of their mission at Ardagh that the people there, in common with the rest of their race, had great reverence for intellectual gifts; that the women were respected and knew how to respect themselves. Moreover, generosity of spirit adorned their character.

The Law "which enlighteneth everyone that cometh into this world" was amongst them a *vital force*. These facts reduced to action in their daily lives, helped to dispose them to receive the Word of God from St. Mel and St. Brigid, and to keep it. They needed only the coming of the Holy Ghost in their midst to enrol them in the great Christian army. The ever adorable Spirit came in these personages, through the agency of St. Mel and Brigid, to the people of Ardagh and its environs. He showed Himself in the great numbers, that joined the monastic institute of both sexes in that locality, in the bountiful generosity, bestowed by many patrons of good will upon them, in the efficient working of the schools there, and in several external works of charity performed by St. Brigid. I will set down only two instances from the many cited by her biographers. A fratricidal deadly hatred existed between the King of Granard Carbry and his brother Connal. Its consequences were likely to be disastrous. Its cause was very serious. It was a dispute about territorial boundaries. Carbry is the same person who some years before had refused to receive Baptism from St. Patrick, but after the lapse of a few more years entered the fold of Christ. About the year 475, these two sons of Niall of the Nine Hostages met in battle array at the head of their clansmen. Before they went out to battle, Connal came to Brigid and said: "Oh holy virgin, bestow on me your special blessing, lest my brother Carbry kill me, on account of the kingdom." "Let your soldiers

precede you and I will bless you following them," said the holy virgin. Her directions were followed.

The armies of these brothers advanced upon each other, and whilst they were so doing, one of the nuns said to Brigid: "Oh Mother Abbess, what shall we do? Behold Carbry, the brother of the prince, advances, and these brothers will strike each other." The holy virgin replied: "God will prevent such a crime." Presently Carbry advanced to St. Brigid and said: "Oh, holy virgin, give me your benediction; I fear meeting my brother Connal in these parts." A film was drawn over the eyes of these two brothers so that they could not recognise each other. They and their armies drew off in different directions, and finally the brothers Carbry and Connal kissed each other through Brigid's prayers.

The second and only other instance of the nobility and generosity of her broad mind and expansive heart illustrates the depth of her sympathetic, kind, and charitable disposition towards the poor. To her they crowded as their best and truest friend. She was to them a centre of gravitation. Their hopes in her had never been confounded. When they wanted bread, corn, cheese, butter, milk, linen, wool or coverlids, and appealed to her pity, their petitions were granted. Thus, according to a pious legend, a great number of paupers came one day to their patroness and friend, and earnestly besought a draught of beer that their thirst might be allayed. The tender-hearted abbess did not know how to refuse these poor people. Being convinced that hope—too frequently the only solace of such poor creatures—told them before their arrival that their petition would be granted, and that a refusal to relieve their sufferings should heavily depress their spirits, decided to use her best efforts to accede to their request and assuage their thirst. On inquiring she found there was no beer in the convent. Puzzled for a time as to what should be done, she at length saw water that had been prepared to give baths to sore-footed poor and others, and taking courage, lifted her eyes, mind, and tongue to the Saviour of the world, who had promised to hear those who ask in His name that He would graciously vouchsafe to hear her prayers and enable her to satisfy the expectations of His poor. The Holy Abbess, lifting her hand, made the sign of the Cross over the water, and invoked the name of Jesus Christ, and the water was turned into beer. He who was pleased to change the water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana converted water into beer through the agency of His holy and faithful Virgin, in order to relieve the thirsting multitude. The relations of our holy Abbess to St. Mel and Ardagh are drawing fast to a close. I find only two other instances—the first is when she asked him and Bishop Melchus to accompany her to Armagh in order to see St. Patrick. Our National Apostle had left Ardagh some considerable time before. Having seen the different institutions there well founded and on their way to steady progress, he started for Armagh to found there a Primatial See, a Primatial Cathedral, and to build a city. It had been already a *See* but not *Primatial*. On his way thither he passed to Magh-Slecht, the principal seat of idolatry in Erin. It is situate on the confines of the Counties Leitrim and Cavan, and of the Dioceses of Ardagh and Kilmore, according to their present boundaries. It is near to

the famous monastery of Fenagh, where was composed the Book of Fenagh, and to which the Bell of Fenagh belonged. It is within the plain of Fenagh, but outside the County Leitrim, and situated within the Barony of Tullyhaw, north-west of Cavan county. There stood Crom Cruach, the great idol of the Milesian Pagan worship, which St. Patrick, with his baculus, Sacred Crozier, struck down, and its twelve Satellite idols, and had all buried in presence of a great multitude of people. Before leaving Cavan he founded a church on the ruins of the Thirteen Idols. Saints Mel and Melchuc accompanied the Holy Abbess to visit their Apostolic Father at Armagh. Some time after this visit St. Brigid left Ardagh, and after a short period of time invited St. Mel to Kildare to help her about the plans of her great Convent, *Mère Maison*, *Head House*, and of her city at Kildare, the king of the place having promised his assistance. Whether St. Mel went or not, like many other mooted questions connected with both saints, is uncertain. This, however, is certain, that if her patron and great friend did go, it is the last recorded occasion of their meeting in this life. He died on the 6th Feb., 488, about four years after, the date most probably assigned to the foundation of her great central house, and was buried in his own Cathedral Church at Ardagh, where the clay of his sanctified body is. Our annalists do not tell us anything about the presence of St. Brigid on the occasion of his death, although most probably she was there, unless some circumstance such as we are not unacquainted with in our daily lives, prevented her. Her Canonesses (this was the name given to them, according to the prevailing laws, for as there were Canons Regular of St. Augustine there were also Canonesses of the same Order), were there to see the body of their good father laid in his grave to await the summons of the final day. No inscribed stone or costly mausoleum marks the spot. He was buried as were the early Christians, the Christians of the first three centuries, who died at Rome, and were buried in the Catacombs of St. Callixtas or St. Agnes, outside the walls. Over their tombs there is no inscription of their names. Their humility was so profound, "a prayer for the soul of the person whose body lies here," was enough—all they asked or expected. It is so generally at Clonmacnoise in relation to St. Kieran and the other saints and kings and princes interred there in the first, the earliest years of its existence as a monastery and cemetery. *The body of Saint Mel therefore sleeps its last sleep within the enclosure of what was his cathedral on the ridge of Ardagh, which saw its first walls arise and has ever since witnessed all the changes of its fortune.*—UNINSCRIBED.

The holy Abbess, Brigid lived on until the year 523, in which most probably she died, on the first February. Her commemorative festival is most religiously kept in the parish of Ardagh each recurring year on the 1st of February, whilst that of St. Mel is celebrated in the Cathedral of Longford on the 6th of the same month each recurring year, with all the ceremonial belonging to a Solemn High Mass, and the attendance of the Dean and Chapter of the diocese.

The Rev. Mother Superioress of the Mercy Convent, Longford, who is at the present time the legitimate canonical representative of the holy Abbess, Brigid of Ardagh, because her convent is attached to St. Mel's Cathedral, and in other ways represents St. Brigid's Con-

ventual House of Canonesses of St. Augustine, honours annually, by an especial celebration, the memory of the great Abbess. A portion of the dust of her sacred body now sleeps at Kildare, where her funeral and burial took place, with all the pomp and ceremonial which the Irish Church at that period could produce. A portion of her dust sleeps also at Downpatrick, whither some of her relics, if not all, were afterwards religiously removed with much solemnity, to be placed beside the remains of St. Patrick and Columbkille, when his Eminence Cardinal Vivian, Legate from the Pope, presided. This solemn ceremony was celebrated in the twelfth century. Thus we have the poetic lines—

“In Down three saints one grave doth fill,
Patrick, Brigid, and Columbkille.”

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A Dublin Priest of high position in the Church told the present writer that the last words spoken by Cardinal Cullen were, “St. Patrick pray for me, St. Brigid pray for me.” Following his example let us wish and pray for their aid in our last moment of this earthly sojourn.

After the days of St. Mel and Brigid, Ardagh as an abbey, as a diocese, and as a parish, pursued the same regular undeviating course of religious duties that it had observed in their life time. The Mother Abbess and her Canonesses of St. Augustine’s Order, followed the same routine of life as they had done in the days of their foundress, in the City of Ardagh. Here it may be well to observe that in this connection the words *Diocese*, *Parish*, and *City*, are synonymous, signifying the same thing, are one and the same administrative unit. In the first centuries of Christianity all the world over it was so. The parish meant the diocese, and the Parish Priest was the Bishop, and the only Parish Priest in the diocese. The establishment of rural parishes and the appointment of Parish Priests in the present accepted sense of these words, was unknown in the earlier centuries of the Christian Church—was unheard of before the sixth century in any part of Christendom. The first mention made of it occurs in the Acts of the Council of Vaison, held in 528 A.D. The present parochial system, however, as known to us, was not brought into practice even in cities, much less in rural districts, before the eleventh century. This was the common law and practice throughout the Catholic world. St. Patrick in establishing the Irish Church followed the rules observed in the rest of Europe. The bishop and his priests lived together in some convenient and central spot or place, which was called the capital or city of the diocese or parish. The parish or diocese was bounded by the limits of the territory belonging to the king or chieftain of the clan amongst whom the Bishop resided as well as their king. It resembled a Swiss canton. The chieftain let out lands to the head or principal clansmen who dwelt on their farms in detached residences called duns or raths or forts—that is, entrenched mounds—numerous remains of which are still to be seen in our country. The chieftain’s was, of course, much higher and firmly entrenched, sheltered, and fortified in every way than those of his clansmen. His residence was usually not far from the bishop’s cathedral. The other raths were scattered about over his territory, but not so far separated, as they might not easily come together in case of an emergency and unite for common purposes of defence or some other object. The

entire population of the district or territory constituted one village—one parish-diocese—and was called a city because of the bishop's residence within it. The only celebration of Divine Mysteries which took place on the Lord's Day or high festivals was the bishop's Mass, at which all his priests celebrated along with him in some such way as we now see on the occasion of the consecration of a bishop. At this Mass, all the subjects of the bishop were bound to attend, and did attend, so great was their fervour and spirit of self sacrifice. Such community life amongst the clergy had many obvious advantages. It afforded great facilities for training young aspirants to the ecclesiastical state, under the eye of the bishop and fully competent masters. It also enabled the city clergy to celebrate the Divine Office and other public duties in choir, and the people to participate in the graces accruing from their presence thereat. It was not until long after the Apostolic times that Mass was given to the people on any occasion or in any place outside the bishop's cathedral. All through, down to the eleventh century, and even later, the parish or diocese was the administrative unit. However, as the centuries passed and the number of Catholics increased, priests were sent out on Sundays to say Mass in little kills, churches, or oratories built by the chieftain and his clansmen for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries. These priests or monks always returned to their monastery in the evening. Such oratories were erected at Abbeydarig and Abbeyshrule, where afterwards subsidiary or lesser monasteries were erected subject to Ardagh, also at Longford, Kilglass or *Legan*, and other places. The parish of Ardagh had for its area all that territory called South Tefia, in Longford—that is to say, all that portion of Longford north-west of the Inny River, except that part which belonged to King Carbery, and which lies still further north, and is called Granard. His clansmen constituted a parish of their own, which was independent of Ardagh, and was ruled by Guasacht as its first abbot and bishop. The Monastery of Abbeylara—which was the monastery established at Granard and dedicated to the B. Virgin Mary—was Bishop Guasacht's monastery, city and parish of Granard. It retained its succession and its autonomy, independence, down to the suppression in Elizabeth's time, when the entire diocese of Clonmacnoise, now annexed to Ardagh, was found to have been up to that date appropriated to the monastery of Abbeylara. All the rectories from Banagher to Moate and Athlone inclusive, were subsidiary to their mother house at Granard, and paid annual tribute to it—thus showing that the boundaries of that ancient diocese followed on the lines of the territory subject to the princes of Tefia. As the years rolled on after St. Patrick's, Mel's and Brigid's death, Ardagh Parish and Abbey, flourishing as it did in monastic discipline and ecclesiastical vocations of both sexes and ecclesiastical learning, sent out, like similar institutions, several priests and nuns to those parts of France and Italy, and that southern part of Europe which had been robbed of religion and civilization by the hordes of barbarians from Asia, the forests of Germany, and elsewhere, congregated under the standard of Atilla. Some of them went even as far as Fiesole—situate outside Florence, the city of "flowers"—in Tuscany. There on the top of a hill overlooking the fairest of cities, amid the myrtles of Ausonia, stands a cathedral dedicated to the memory of its first

bishop, St. Donatus, of Ireland, who lived and died in the sixth century. There he had laboured as a simple priest and missionary before being called by the unanimous voice of the people, as was then the custom of election, to become their bishop. The present cathedral, standing near to the meeting of three roads and near to the glorious institute of the Jesuits, was erected over the spot where our illustrious countryman so often celebrated High Mass. His body rests within its walls, in a part of Italy celebrated for its landscape and other scenic beauties to a degree excelling most of the most lovely parts of that enchanting country. It was there "the Sabeans used to kiss hands to the bright stars of heaven." However, the peaceful, happy and useful tenor of monastic life at Ardagh, as in other parts of Ireland, was soon to receive a rude and stunning shock. Clouds came over the brightness of its days, and its sun was obscured:

"With storm and rack its sky got black with sleet and dashing rain."

A veritable blizzard-cyclone and tornado of barbarism in their most cruel form, combined and linked to the worst species of kindred concomitants, put in motion by diabolical agency, appeared on the horizon of the Irish coast about the beginning of the 9th century. It blew from the north; it came from the sea; it wafted hordes of pirates upon our Irish shores, who arrived to destroy for the sake of destroying, and after a manner hitherto unknown to civilized peoples. These barbarous hordes are known to history by the name of North men, more commonly called the Danes and Scandinavians. After having passed like a cloud of locusts over the table-lands of Europe they took possession of the seas, became its kings. Away from civilization, trained there for years, they became masters of physical strength and cruelty. They, many of them, were trained to imitate dogs or wolves, or bears in their methods of attack. They were taught to tear off their clothes and howl and foam and roar like these ferocious animals. They plundered, destroyed and burned churches, monasteries, schools and nunneries, and put bishops and clergy to death. They dishonoured in the foulest way the devout female sex, without distinction of class or rank or condition. After robbing married women of their most precious jewel, they killed their children, and, like the Romans of old when they made a holiday by throwing Christians to the lions in the Colosseum, they made a pastime by throwing the dead bodies of infants from the top of one spear to another, amidst derisive, diabolical laughter.

It was no wonder some of the nuns mutilated their faces—in a manner after the example of the Roman heroine of old, who took away her own life rather than submit to foul lustful dishonour), that they might escape the inhuman touch of the Dane or Scandinavian. Turgesius, their barbaric, cruel and lustful leader, came into this fair garden of the parish of Ardagh, penetrated as far as the Shannon Islands contiguous to Newtown Cashel, and before returning, was guilty of some of his foulest and most inhuman acts. However, on his return, King Malachy of Meath captured him and drowned him in Lough Onel. In his day that young and beautiful lady, arrayed in the most costly costume, shining with brilliant jewels, bearing a wand in her hand, on which was placed a precious ring; of whom Ireland's poets and sons and daughters used to tell with such just pride, could no longer pass through this island from sea to sea without molestation. The prophecy attributed to St.

Patrick was fulfilled, namely, a vision in which he first saw the whole of Ireland lit up; then the mountains only; then only a few lamps twinkling in the valleys. There is nothing in this world, of its own nature, indestructible and everlasting. Ireland's special mission as an evangeliser and teacher came to an end, not for ever it is true, but to an end of too lengthened duration. The night was indeed very long and dark before its resurrected sun arose, in whose heat and light we and our race beyond Erin's shores now enjoy supernatural life, health and vigour. Our Irish Annalists bear testimony to the noble part our Parish, Diocese, and City of Ardagh took in that eventful period. With the fall of the Danes as a military power at the Battle of Clontarf, on Good Friday, 18th of April, 1014, an amelioration, in relation to the state of religion, slowly followed. The wounds inflicted, the damage done during a period of over two hundred years were of too serious, permanent, and far-reaching a nature to be speedily healed and made good. Education, learning, and civilization had been mortally stabbed through the heart of religion. Moreover, the Danes, although beaten by Brian Boru, or more correctly speaking, Kings Kennedy and Malachy Melaghlin, still retained and were masters of the cities of Wexford, Waterford, Cork, and Dublin, which they had either founded or rebuilt. Their influence for evil was not, therefore, wholly crushed, and they exercised it. The Dane was inexpellable from any country he ever got firm foot hold in. His history proves it. He could and was civilized, but never wholly expelled or eradicated. Besides, Brian Boru had unwittingly done lasting damage to the Irish cause (although he atoned for it by a noble, heroic death) by deposing Malachy as Monarch of Ireland. The King, Kennedy, who succeeded, was not of the line of the old kings of Ireland. Thus Brian in bringing about the deposition of Malachy, destroyed the prestige and power of the ancient monarchy, and although he defeated the Danish forces he threw back, by a heavy and ill-starred stroke of policy, the vitality of the Kingdom in relation to its internal reconstruction and consolidation. The old system of succession to the throne having been overturned, there remained no paramount power with sufficient authorization and strength to control the provincial kings and petty Chieftains. Thus, after Brian's death, although Malachy was reappointed to his former position and dignity, still after his death there was no Monarch of all Ireland for many years. And so we learn on the best authority, that the kingdom lapsed still lower into outrages, intestine feuds and wars, there being no *Central and Sovereign* authority in the country. Learning, civilization, and religion descended more deeply from the very nature of things. In all these evils the parish of Ardagh had its share, and bore itself nobly and courageously, according to the records of our Annalists. It experienced, however, in common with others, that the evil of the actions of well-intentioned men sometimes causes disastrous results.

The nation became a prey to intestine strife, feud-war, jealousy, ambition, and misplaced love. The people were apathetic; the ruling king, so far as there was an acknowledged ruler at the time, was weak. Several Synods had been held by the bishops during the period that intervened between April, 1014, and the year 1170. Much good resulted from these assemblies to the internal working of the

Church in Ireland. Some of the ecclesiastics who attended the Synods were very learned and holy men. Many others, still more learned, belonging to Ireland, were abroad, teaching, praying, and waiting to be recalled to their native land to rebuild her ruined sanctuaries. Notwithstanding all these home and foreign influences of such great magnitude, the spirit of dissension increased. The evil seed sown by Brian Boru struck root and grew up and choked the seeds sown by the true friends of the kingdom. Finally, in the second half of the twelfth century, one of Ireland's kings, aided by a powerful section of ambitious and disappointed persons, sought foreign aid, waited on King Henry II. of England, and prayed his Majesty to come to Ireland and take up that authority of which Brian Boru had deprived the Monarch Malachy. The temporarily unhappy, but finally, through repentance, happy Devorgilla, gave a helping hand to this panacea, so strongly urged by empirics. Such action cannot, I think, be better described in moderate language than by the French saying:—" *O'n n'est jamais pas trahi que par les siens*": *People are never so badly betrayed as by their own.*

The outcome of this national chaos, when so many fought for themselves and so few for the common good, was the landing of the Anglo-Normans on our coasts about A.D. 1170. This event constitutes an epoch of more than ordinary interest and import for our nation, ecclesiastically as well as civilly. Therefore, before I come to deal with it, which I shall do briefly, I will return to our own beloved Ardagh—Parish, Diocese, City—and see how it stands after all these changeful times.

I find in the books before me, the very highest and most reliable authorities on such subjects, that it held its own with admirable prudence of action, tenacity of principle and purpose, throughout the various vicissitudes to which it was subjected. Its Abbey is, in a rather better state; its auxiliary monasteries and oratories are in existence, and attended to on Sundays. It has got an extension of its territory, which was conceded it at the Synod of Kells, presided over by Cardinal Paparo, Legate from the reigning Pope, in the year 1152. It is since that date a bigger *Parish—Diocese—City*. Its territory *since* and *now* embraces not only that portion of the county Longford already indicated, but also the territory of the Princes or Chieftains MacRannalls of Leitrim (the Reynolds family).

This addition extended its boundaries not only to Drumshambo inclusive but further, probably embraced the parish now presided over by the Patriarchal Thomas Canon Cahill, P.P., V.F., Killenumbra. The boundaries of Ardagh Parish were defined to be at the Synod of Kells, the same as the then existing boundaries of the Kingdom of the O'Farrells or O'Ferrells, of Annally, and the MacReynolds of Leitrim. So they stand to this day. Of course, this demanded an extension of anxious care, provision and prevision, and all the rest, which increase of responsibility and amplitude of power require for the adequate discharge of the duties of an able, conscientious, generous, large-minded, and noble man, or body of men. God, in his great and good providence, gave a succession of such men to the territories of the kings and princes of Ardagh who helped so well to build up and hand down the noble heritage, we, unworthy children of theirs, through no merit of our own, possess.

And now I come back to the second landing of foreigners on our Irish coasts. The Northman was the first; the Norman is the second. The first is a cruel barbarian by birth, profession, lineage, and choice. His barbarism is his glory. The Norman, although an offshoot of the Northman, is the very opposite. Religion and civilization are his motto. He claims to be the standard-bearer of both. The Northman has a very bad history. He started from Asia in the early ages of Christianity, a pauper in everything, save savagery, strength, and daring. He swooped his way across to Italy, having been joined on the road by kindred spirits, notably savages from the woods of Germany and Denmark, Norway, Scandinavia, Sweden, and Jutland; bore down upon the fair fields and gardens of religion and civilization in Southern Europe, chiefly France and Italy, overturned everything dear to the hearts of Christians that came in their way, and rested not until stopped by the sea. Emboldened by success they resolved to conquer the sea barrier, became pirates, went in for long and severe training, and after years of such savage life bore down successfully on England. The remnant they left behind, in the countries through which they passed like a destructive hurricane in course of ages, became civilized, and in God's inscrutable designs and judgments landed in England, at the head of William of Normandy, to give impulse and vigour to religion and civilization in that country, where both had lamentably fallen away. After fiercely fought battles they were victorious. William the Conqueror and his Knights succeeded in forcing great blessings on England, in which, after a time, its people acquiesced and felt thankful. The reigning Pope blessed the French Normans and their works. They did great things for civilization. They improved the style of church architecture in England as they certainly did in Ireland; they even made almost a new language for them. Henry II., King of England, sent his army to Ireland with the avowed intention, the specifically stated object of doing for our forefathers what had been done a considerable period before for the inhabitants of England. It is admitted by all historians that whilst there were in Ireland at that period, individuals of great sanctity and learning, and still a larger number on the continent of Europe, yet the general state of religion, learning, and civilization was low and needed reform. With reform on their lips came the Anglo-Normans.

The reigning Pope, through the agency of whose predecessors Ireland had received her most invaluable and priceless gifts, in fact, all that she held most near and dear, grieved for his children. Children may not always realize the anxiety, care, and affection of parents, may not always feel as grateful as they should, but parents retain to death an inexpressible love and interest in their offspring.

Accordingly, the Popes of the period blessed the undertaking of the Anglo-Normans in so far as it had for its object the betterment of the Kingdom of Ireland. And although the avowed object was not realized, and the Pope's intentions were frustrated, to the everlasting credit and honour of the Irish race at home and abroad, it has been written, and ever shall be written, that the Irish Catholics never blamed them, never found fault with them.

It should be borne in mind that up to the landing of Henry II.'s army on our shores, the Irish and the Saxon, the Celt and the

Briton, were very good friends—friends in the Irish schools and universities to which the Saxon and Briton came for that education which he could not get at home, friends in the monasteries, friends in France and Italy, whither they went as monks and missionaries to rebuild the fabric of religion and civilization. It is not on record in any historical work that bad feeling existed between the Saxon, Briton, Celt and Irish before the twelfth century. The very contrary is clearly written, and not only that, but even after the landing of Henry's army, we read almost everywhere, in the histories of the succeeding period, that the English who settled down here in Ireland became identified with our ancestors to such a degree in every way as to be called more Irish than the Irish themselves. Whatever friction there was at the time seems to have been an offshoot of that jealousy and envy amongst rival kings, princes, chieftains and their families, which had existed to a most lamentable degree.

And yet, great trouble came to us in the wake of the Anglo-Norman. It arose some centuries after his landing. It began with Henry VIII., and reached the height and depth of anguish, misery, and woe beyond description, in the reign of Elizabeth. Never in the history of mankind is there a story parallel all round, such as the record of our ancestors' sufferings for their faith. It compels one to shudder, one's pen to shake, one's blood to freeze, to read and think over it. It is worse than the record of the early Christians at Rome. Our faith commands us to forgive injuries, and we most willingly obey its behests. But it is very hard, almost superhuman, for the scions of old stocks of an ancient, immemorial race, of a civilization centuries older than the first civilized Anglo-Norman; it approaches the impossible to expect that the offspring of a people so persecuted and degraded in the very places where their ancestors once reigned and ruled beneficently, honourably, and nobly, should entirely forget those grievances.

The doctrine taught in Ardagh of old, as in the Ardagh of to-day, imperatively orders forgiveness, and strongly recommends forgetfulness, whilst it advises at the same time strenuous endeavours to regain by every just and lawful means within our grasp and at our disposal, the positions lost in the past. Simultaneously with these injunctions, Ardagh in the past as well as in the present, enjoined and enjoins upon her subjects kindness to all. We belong to the same country. Our neighbours and our living countrymen are not the people who have wronged our ancestors, or wronged us. If the old abbey never conferred upon our ancestors and their posterity any greater blessing than this spirit of forgiveness and forgetfulness of injuries, we should look upon ourselves as everlasting debtors to its progenitors and conservators, because the truth thus conveyed is an echo of what was taught and practised on Calvary's Hill, the nearest spot to heaven, and retaught in the sermon on the Mount—the most useful, enduring and exalted piece of Legislation ever promulgated to mankind.

Shortly after Henry II. took possession of Ireland, Synods were held, new parishes established, benefices created, ten families being the minimum required to constitute a parish. A fixed and certain income for each parish was established by law. A similar law exists at the present time throughout the entire province of Quebec,

Canada, where the parish priests' or rectors' dues are recoverable in a civil court of law, just the same as any other just and lawful debt. The Irish parish priests in those days were called rectors. There were pastors and rectors. The number of parishes erected were much more numerous then than *now*, although the population was smaller. The dioceses, however, were enlarged, the boundaries considerably extended and more accurately defined. The number of bishops lessened, whilst the number of parish priests was increased. In St. Patrick's time, as every parish had a bishop at its head, the number of bishops in Ireland and during that period, and for at least three centuries after, was over three hundred.

In the new state of things Ardagh parish underwent a considerable change. However, its bishop resided there up to the reign of Henry VIII, and Elizabeth. During their cruel reigns all the monasteries and nunneries of the County Longford and Leitrim were dismantled and their inmates, either put to death or exiled. In Abbeyshrule and Abbeylara the butcheries were especially horrible. The succession to the See and parishes was interrupted; yet, on the whole, wonderfully well kept up. The bishop and his pastors found a bed in some cave or hiding-place in a bog, and said Mass on Sundays behind some bush or tree, at which the people assisted in the open air, and at a place from which the priest-hunters might be seen. Such practically was the state of religion amongst us from Elizabeth's reign until the close of the 18th century. About that period the bishops began to live in the open, likewise the pastors.

But Ardagh, owing to its dismantled condition, ceased to be the place of their residence, and never was since. There was no fixed residence within our diocese for its bishop until the present Parochial House in Ballymahon was obtained for that use, and was occupied by Dr. Cruise in the beginning of the last century. His immediate predecessor (Dr. Brady), resided for a time in Irishtown, Athlone, and towards the close of his life resided in Knockagh House, Carrickmond parish, and Dr. MacDermott Roe, at Knockranny, Kilonan, Keadue, County Roscommon, where his body lies in the vault of the MacDermott family, and beside Carolan, the last of our bards. Ballymahon continued to be the Episcopal residence until the arrival of the great and good Dr. Kilduff, of holy and revered memory, who brought to completion the gigantic cathedral, that magnificent and beautiful poem in stone, commenced by his illustrious predecessor, Dr. O'Higgins, and erected the college of St. Mel in a short period of time. Since those days his illustrious successors resided at Longford. Ardagh, once a city, a diocese, lost its prestige and high standing as a diocesan residence in the Penal times, and *never regained it*.

The succession of its parish priests was as elsewhere, irregular, at least so far as public records tell. It is possible that their names are in old documents or state papers at the Record Office, or in Trinity College, Dublin; but from experience I know that a search for them in those or other places would involve such a period of time and labour as are practically beyond my reach at the present time. I regret it is so, because their names deserve to be written in letters of gold, and perpetuated from generation to generation in

the diocese of Ardagh, and especially in the parish of Ardagh and Moydow, as heroic witnesses and confessors of the Faith. They were martyrs in one or more of the meanings of that word.

I find in an old manuscript, said to be at the present time in the Municipal Library at Cambrai, France, which was translated by the late indefatigable Eugene O'Curry, the following extract from a sermon preached at a Synod held in Ireland A.D., 689, and said to have been read by Irish lips to an Irish congregation in France in the 7th century :—"We find it shown forth in the words of the wise man that there are three kinds of martyrdom, and every affliction thereon is accounted a Cross, whether we suffer the white martyrdom or grey martyrdom or red martyrdom. The white martyrdom is that in which a man, for God's sake, parts with everything that he loves, though the afflictions of poverty may reach him. The grey martyrdom is when a man in sorrow and penitence, conquers and renounces his passions. The red martyrdom is when a man is crucified with Christ and slain for his sake. To such martyrdom did the Apostles attain while rooting out evil and establishing the Law of God, and thus their bodies endured the three martyrdoms. Thus did they repent more and more; thus did they cast their passions from them; thus did they endure torment and affliction, suffering and labour for the sake of Christ; thus having suffered the three kinds of martyrdom, they are precious before God, and this reward shall we receive if we fulfil their law." *Castitas in juventute, continentia in abundantia*—when "charity is practised in youth continence shall afterwards abound."

The names of the worthy pastors of Ardagh and Moydow are written in the Book of Life, are well known to God who is their rewarder, their Light and their Love Eternal. In our own days, however, three Parish Priests successively and successfully ruled and resided in Ardagh. They are admittedly worthy successors of their great and good sires in that renowned place. Their names are the Very Reverends Dean Farrelly, V.F.; Archdeacon Reynolds, V.G.; and Canon O'Farrell, V.F. During the lifetime of the first of these three dignitaries the *renaissance* or *renewal* period of Church building and architecture, was commenced in Moydow, where stands a fine substantial, commodious, and well-equipped Church, erected by his exertions and the contributions of his people some years before his death. He did not live long enough to see the laying of the foundation stone of the present new, graceful, and in every way beautiful Gothic Church at Ardagh, where he resided and died at a very advanced old age. In appearance, his contemporaries used to say, he resembled O'Connell. It is also said that whilst curate of Banagher, King's County, and chaplain to the military stationed there, when he was called by them Officer Farrelly, he rode on horseback after saying his Masses on Christmas Day to Springfield, Granard, and was there in time for his dinner. In those days the saddle was as much or more the home of the Irish priest than anywhere else, and made him in many respects like unto a great Ecclesiastical Knight. King George IV., on the occasion of his visit to Ireland, having seen Dean Farrelly at Kingstown, is said to have remarked that he considered him one of the finest looking ecclesiastics in his kingdom. His dispositions and character are said

to have been in keeping with his appearance. He lived an edifying life and died a holy death. Immediately after him came the Venerable Archdeacon Reynolds, Vicar-General, a priest of gigantic intellect, robust constitution, high collegiate distinctions, noble ideals, and great energies. In his day he stamped his character on the diocese, St. Mel's College, and the parish of Ardagh. Being a man of indomitable courage, he commenced the erection of St. Brigid's Gothic Church, Ardagh, an undertaking quite sufficient, on account of its magnitude, to make even stout hearts quail. The measure of success attending his laborous efforts was exceeding great. During the progress of its erection he, to the deep regret of his many friends and admirers, lost his health, which was never restored to him. However, he had the great gratification of seeing his new Church solemnly blessed and opened, and hearing his Grace the Primate of all Ireland, the Most Rev. Dr. McGettigan, preach on that joyous occasion. The Archdeacon lived only a few years after. He died, respected and beloved by all who were acquainted with him, and his remains now sleep the long sleep outside but contiguous to the Church of his heart, on the southern side. A beautiful and costly monument, erected at the expense of his brother, Mr. Henry Reynolds, J.P., Ballinallee, marks the spot. His name was put forward on two occasions by the Ardagh priests for the succession to the Mitre and Crozier of Ardagh.

On the day of his month's memory the present highly distinguished Parish Priest of Ardagh and Moydow, the Very Rev. Canon O'Farrell, P.P. and V.F., was appointed to succeed him. On that eventful occasion the Parochial Mantle of Ardagh was placed on shoulders—highly worthy and thoroughly able to carry it with decorous dignity and edifying effect. Although comparatively young in years he was of ripe experience, having served at God's Altar in the principal parishes of the diocese as Curate, Administrator, and Parish Priest, to which should be added the literary and other advantages accruing from residence at the College of St. Mel as Professor and afterwards President. Moreover, he was endowed with good physical health, and a high order of intellectual qualities well developed by careful study of books and of mankind. He needed all these qualifications for the adequate and successful discharge of the duties appertaining to his new charge. Passing over the great traditions of the parish and responsibilities accruing therefrom, he was obliged to face a heavy debt on St. Brigid's New Church, and incur fresh and heavy burdens in order to complete it. Marble altars, and the erection of the great and graceful tower and bell, stained-glass windows, one of which was erected to the memory of Very Rev. Dean Farrelly at the cost of some of his relatives, together with colossal statues to Saints Patrick, Mel, and Brigid, all these and other responsibilities rose up before him. With apostolic courage and zeal he faced the work undaunted. A generous and noble people at home (notably Miss Quinn) supported his self-sacrificing labours; whilst outside, many friends and admirers came to his aid. Thus his administration has been an admirable success. His work of completion and decoration is not fully accomplished. The tower is nearing its apex and ornamental cross it is true, but the funds for its payment are not as near their last shilling or pound, as it is to its last stone, and even if they were this

worthy Canon has other works of parochial improvement and utility before him. It is true he has taken the wise precaution recommended in the Holy Scriptures, fourteenth chapter and twenty-eighth verse of St. Luke—"For which of you having a mind to build a tower doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it; lest after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that see it begin to mock him saying: this man began to build and was not able to finish." Nevertheless an anxious state of mind arising from that uncertainty which hovers over and around the best-conceived and directed human exertions, must be his until the projected bazaar has been declared to be a thorough success, and St. Brigid's Church of Ardagh ready for solemn consecration by reason of its entire freedom from all debt. Already it has received the usual Episcopal blessing and was dedicated to the patronage of Saints Mel and Brigid. But it requires solemn consecration before being handed over to God as a free untrammelled gift to be used for evermore in His Divine Service.

Such a happy result is expected from the coming Bazaar, owing to the nature and circumstances of its object, and the character of the chief factors in it, to which should be added other contingent considerations connected or associated with Ardagh itself.

Amongst the latter, high place and proud distinction should be most freely and gratefully accorded to the children of Ardagh beyond the Irish Sea. The Bishops who ruled Ardagh since 1862, to the certain knowledge of the writer of this essay, felt and expressed on many occasions emotions of honourable and legitimate pride in the useful and successful careers of their priests that having received their classical and intermediate education in such centres of learning as were to be found in the diocese at that time, and their philosophical, scriptural, and theological knowledge in the Foreign Missionary College of Ireland or other lands, went abroad to evangelize the inhabitants of the newly-discovered countries. Their number is very great. Some of them were elevated to the highest positions in the Church of the United States, America, Canada, Trinidad, Buenos Ayres, and elsewhere. Since the beginning, priests from Ardagh could be found in almost every land beyond the Irish Channel. They were and are of every grade from Archbishop to Curate, and as a body honoured the diocese and country of their birth, felt proud of its institutions, notably St. Mel's Cathedral, its college, and the recently erected Churches within its boundaries, to all, or nearly all, of which they munificently subscribed and encouraged their people to do likewise.

Their good example had an inspiring influence on the lay sons and daughters of Ardagh. Thus our Cathedral, College, and almost every church, convent, and many of the new parochial houses and schools owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to our Ardagh priests and people abroad, notably in the United States of America. Some Ardagh priests there have been, and are, to our great gratification, amongst the most honoured, respected, and useful generals and captains of the Church militant, whilst they became and are recognised to be, sturdy champions and valiant promoters of true liberty and progress (words of delightful sound, denoting the harmonious concord of great gifts) to the people of the mighty Republic.

Being Catholic priests in the truest and noblest sense of these words, they gave, untrammelled, the homage of their full service to the interests of God's Church in the first place, and in the second place, to the full development of that true liberty which America enjoys.

I have the honour of the acquaintance of many, and can count some of them amongst my dearest and most valued friends. I have seen them at home in Canada, Fall River, New Jersey, New York, and Brooklyn, and I feel bound to say any diocese or nation should be proud of them. I feel strongly tempted to mention some of their names and great works, especially some of my friends in Brooklyn, but I refrain from doing so, because I feel convinced that this will please them more than if I did, and that the consciousness of their own integrity as priests and citizens, their abiding sense of strictly honourable and upright conduct, is to them the purest and most appreciable of all earthly rewards or pleasures. In writing thus my main object is to point out one of Ardagh's titles to present glory which is to be found in her priesthood abroad, and derives much of its lustre from their Apostolic career and successful care of the children of their natal diocese and race. We live in the renaissance, or renewal period, of the old glory once acquired on the plains and forests of France and on the plains and in the mountains of Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, and Bavaria, in which latter country we have a canonised saint who was for a time Bishop of Ardagh; afterwards at the request of the Pope went to Germany, was appointed Bishop of Ratisbon, died there, was buried in a convent of nuns, and was canonised by Pope Leo IX. in the year 1052. A special Mass and Office are said in his honour at Ratisbon where his remains are religiously preserved in the cathedral. I find myself unable to abstain from putting down a few words regarding two other illustrious ecclesiastical dignitaries, dead for some few years, who belonged to Ardagh and shed lustre on its name by reason of their great and good qualities—I refer to the Right Rev. Monsignor Corcoran, D.D., of the Corcoran family in the parish of Ardagh, who died at Philadelphia in St. Charles Seminary a few years ago. On the authority of the Right Rev. Monsignor Quinn, D.D., late of New York, and of several of his contemporaries who spoke and wrote of him, I will give an abbreviation of his almost preternatural qualities. Such an adept was he as a linguist that he spoke with fluency all the modern languages of Europe, and was much at home in Hebrew and Sanscrit. He was Editor of the "Catholic Miscellany," and afterwards and up to the close of his life of the "American Catholic Quarterly Review." He was by many degrees the ablest theologian on the American continent.

No Christian sect or denomination in America could produce, or pretend to produce, such a scholar. He had no equal in that country during his lifetime. He was to it what St. Thomas of Aquin, whom he resembled much in physical appearance, was to the Catholic world in philosophy and theology. He was a monarch in a vast republic, but the republic acknowledging his sovereignty was and is a republic of "Letters." This eulogium, although strong, is not exaggerated. I come to the great and good Father

Drumgoole, native of Abbeylora Parish, Granard, who was the greatest friend and benefactor of that immensely large number of boys called waifs and strays, to be found in the chief cities and towns of the United States, America. Father Drumgoole erected a Home for them in New York and on Staton Island, where he gathered by supernatural attraction about two thousand annually for several years before his death, taught them religion, civilized them, brought them up to reproductive trades, and sent them out yearly, after due periods of training, to enter upon useful careers as law-abiding citizens and respectable members of society. Several of the noblemen of England who saw his Home at New York subscribed annually towards its support, notably Lord Rosebery. It was admitted throughout America that no Christian sect or body of philanthropists in their country produced such a benefactor of youth as Father Drumgoole. He had no equal in the Christian world during his days, except Don Bosco of holy memory, who effected in Italy such a reformation as was accomplished by Father Drumgoole in America. The souls of both these great Churchmen, we hope, have already reached heaven. I had the great privilege of seeing them in their homes, enjoying their conversation, and participating in their hospitality, a privilege I shall ever cherish in my memory. The lustre of their lives and works should be reflected on Ardagh as sunbeams are upon this our earth, giving health, warmth, and life to animate and inanimate nature. I now come to a name representing a wholly different character, and yet a great and honoured name, not only wherever the English language is spoken, but even amongst other peoples and in other lands. It is that of Oliver Goldsmith, whose associations with Ardagh entitle me to claim—first, an emanation of no small magnitude from that constellation of glory which surrounds his name and fame. It was in Ardagh he accidentally laid the foundation of that idea, afterwards so magnificently worked into one of the most brilliant efforts of his genius, the comedy, entitled—“*She Stoops to Conquer, or the Mistakes of a Night*.” Happy mistake it turned out to be for Goldsmith, because it developed in after years into a train of thought which in due course of evolution produced a literary work that emblazoned his name with glory and filled his pockets with money, a consummation most highly gratifying to the impecunious Oliver. The royalties of the day and multitudes of Londoners flocked to the theatre to hear it. His fame was established and his pecuniary embarrassments removed. It is said that the simple, unsuspecting childish disposition and manner, which led him into the mistake at Ardagh, in the mansion of the ancestor of its present owner, Sir George Fetherstone, Bart, accompanied him through life, even to the end. Hence the lines:—

“He wrote like an angel,
But talked like poor Poll.”

Needless to observe upon what is so generally conceded—that as the years roll on his writings hold the field, nay, advance in public estimation by reason of their fascinating simplicity, admirable chasteness, polished ease, and almost divine felicity of expression; clothing betimes most sublime and celestial ideas. It has been deservedly said of him by Dr. Johnson—*Nihil est quod non tetigit, et nullum tetigit*

quod non ornavit—"there was nothing that he did not touch; and nothing that he touched, that he did not adorn." How changed the Oliver Goldsmith in the days of his stroll through Westminster Abbey, with his friend Johnson, surveying the poet's corner, when the former said to the latter *Forsitan nomen nostrum miscebitur istis* (perhaps I shall yet occupy a place here—prophetic words); since those days of his blundering boyhood, when he started from Pallas Forgnay, Co. Longford, his father's residence, to enter as a student the classical school at Edgeworthstown, known as the Edgeworth's School, to the fame of which he added, not indeed by his successful proficiency whilst there, for he was a flower that blossomed late in life, but by his subsequent extraordinary development. The haunts of his youthful days are here in the immediate neighbourhood of Ardagh. The place of his birth, Pallas, is easily distinguishable from the hill adjoining Ardagh's neat village. From the summit of that hill the spot where his father's house once stood and in which he was born can be easily seen. Literary men of high distinction as scholars, and well earned and deserved repute in their profession, would persuade us that to Elphin, Co. Roscommon, belongs the honour attaching to Goldsmith's birth place. It should be interesting to hear this question debated before a duly competent and accredited judge and jury of twelve literary umpires. Dr. Cox being the leader for the Elphin claim, and some other equally eminent literateur the leader for the Pallas claim. Until some further evidence in favour of Elphin is produced the claims for retaining the distinctions accruing to the place and county of his birth shall be held to rightfully belong to the neighborhood of Ardagh. Holding these views I will, in some further observations to be made before closing this essay, designate Forgnay and its environs as *the* Goldsmith country. Let us come then and take a view of this interesting and historic territory as seen from the highest and most advantageous point in its neighbourhood. That point can be found without much difficulty on the mountain overshadowing the village of Ardagh.

Before setting out for this spot, it will be well to obtain a good pair of binoculars, for the range and scope of scenery to be viewed may be described to be limited only by the visionary power vested in the bright natural orbs set under the forehead of the tourist or sight-seer. In any case the binoculars will be useful.

From the summit of that hill or mountain, a glorious vista, a magnificent panorama of charming and varied scenery, lies out distinctly and boldly before one's eyes. Looking north-west, due north, and north-east, some of the Roscommon, Leitrim, Cavan, Westmeath, and east Meath hills and mountains rise up in pleasing proportions and grandeur before your gaze, whilst the Moat of Granard, holding a unique place amongst the group of elevated objects, can scarcely escape ocular attraction. Extending one's vision south-east, due south, and south-west, the hills and mountains adjoining Castle Pollard, Mullingar, Moate, Athlone, Ussney, Slieve Bloom, Queen's County, and some in King's County, lift their heads before your natural or artificially assisted eyes. The Upper Shannon, with all its magnificence, its wooded and unwooded islands, dotted here and there with the ruins of monastic buildings and churches, appears also as a lovely, beautiful hand-maid shining up betimes in silvery and golden-hued costume to her neighbouring hills and mountains, and adding charm-

ing scenic effect to their united majesty and grandeur. Taking away your eyes from those objects and casting them on a well-wooded table-land of more than ordinary sylvan beauty, here and there intersected by moorland, where rich green fields give generous pasturage to multitudes of the quadruped genus and species, so pathetically referred to by Goldsmith in his *Deserted Village*, as having taken the place of a bold peasantry, "once their country's pride," you shall behold the ruins of the old castles of the Kings of Annally, appearing in mourning and weeping; also a few smalltowns. The spires and towers of churches raise their towering faces, with the gigantic and colossal Cathedral of St. Mel at their head, pointing heavenwards, and inviting us to elevate our minds and all their faculties to the land of indescribable and everlasting beauty as to our real home and country.


Amongst these churches, St. Brigid's of Ardagh, taking it as it stands, with its beautifully-arranged processional grounds, choice shrubs and flowers, tastefully and gracefully-arranged interior, deserves the first praise. Its exterior is protected by a stout wall of evergreen trees to save it from the severe and piercing wintry blasts that come from the west, north and east in the bad season. So striking and varied is the scenic beauty of this country—the Goldsmith country—commencing at Edgeworthstown, extending south-east to Forgnay church, where is Oliver's stained-glass window of artistic excellence, and to Newcastle, Ballymahon, the magnificent residence of Colonel King-Harman, D.L.; and South West to New-Town-Cashel, situate on the fringe of Lough Rea, in the Upper Shannon that some gentlemen are strongly of opinion *this district* should be made an adjunct to the Shannon Development Company. It is their opinion that for a few months of the year a coach or omnibus service should be run from Edgeworthstown across or around the Hill of Ardagh, straight away to the Shannon, to a convenient pier between Ballymahon and Newtowncashel. Whatever may be thought of the financial aspect of this matter, it appears to me it should be conceded that the scenery alluded to adds a gem to the crown of *Old Ardagh*.

If its past and present glory have not been duly maintained by the present writer, this fault or defect, in so far as it is to be traced to him individually, does not arise from want of an earnest and sincere desire to see its memorials and urns properly honoured and maintained, now and always. With the Umbrian Lyrist he ventures to write: "*In magnis, et voluisse satis est.*" In great and noble objects and undertakings, a sincere and earnest wish to benefit, is betimes sufficient and praiseworthy.

A highly gifted and distinguished writer gives the following translation of the above quotation from Horace:—

"Be of RIGHT PURPOSE. Have good will
To all that lives, letting unkindness die
And greed and wrath; so that your lives be made
Like soft airs passing by."

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The background of the entire page is a marbled paper pattern. It features a complex, organic design with swirling, cell-like shapes in various shades of brown, tan, and cream. The pattern is dense and covers the entire surface, giving it a textured, aged appearance.

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